

INTERROGATING THE ROLE OF ZIMBABWE'S PRINT MEDIA IN  
ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING

By

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## DECLARATION

I, Eisborn Webster Mandizvidza: 5763-957-4, declare that **Interrogating the Role of Zimbabwe's Print Media in Environmental Reporting** is my own work; both in design and execution, and that all the sources I consulted and/or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature.....

Date: 29 MAY 2018

## Summary

The study aimed to explore the coverage of environmental news by Zimbabwe's print media. The research is premised on the admission that the press covers environmental issues in their reportage. However, the study revealed that there are challenges obtaining in environmental reporting by the three weeklies, namely; *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail*. The use of content analysis and critical discourse analysis in analysing the environmental news stories helped to highlight the shortcomings of media houses and journalists as depicted by their choice of words or phrases, the inclusion as well as exclusion of certain viewpoints. The study analysed environmental news in themes such as imminent decimation of wildlife through poaching, climate change, violation of wetlands, destruction of forests, and land reclamation. To aid the understanding and appreciation of environmental reporting by the press, the study utilised three media theories, namely, agenda-setting, development media theory, and framing. Chapter one focused on introducing the context of the study, as well as justifying it, and adopted the qualitative research method for the study. Chapter two gave an extended review for the study. Chapter three provided the research methodology. Chapter four analysed environmental stories published by the *Daily News on Sunday*. Chapter five analysed environmental stories which were published in *The Financial Gazette*. Chapter six gave an analysis of environmental news published in *The Sunday Mail*. Chapter seven concluded the study by giving a summary of the central argument of the study which was that the Zimbabwean press fell short in effectively and efficiently sourcing, selecting and disseminating environmental news. The chapter proffered some recommendations which point to some areas which require further studies.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **1. Context of the study**

Matters related to the management of environment have taken centre stage in Africa. The Paris Agreement drew attention to the need to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change. It aims to achieve this by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Additionally, the agreement aims to strengthen the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change. The Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa sought to create a framework of obligations to strictly regulate the transboundary movements of wastes to and within Africa. Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) has one of the fastest growing populations in the world. The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation posits that the challenges of increasing food requirements have inevitably presented the region with additional challenges of uncontrolled deforestation and cultivation of fragile ecosystems, resulting in soil erosion, desertification, biodiversity loss, decline in agricultural productivity and ensuing socio-economic upheavals (CTA, 2004). This is evidence that more than ever before the world in general and Africans in particular no longer take the environment for granted. Information about environmental management is accessed through the media. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, 2006) posits that although not a big polluter, Africa is quite vulnerable to climate change. Human vulnerability revolves around two issues, that is, exposure to environmental hazards and the coping capability of people to these hazards.

Media are considered the 'fourth estate' because of their capacity to shape perceptions and perspectives on socio-economic and political matters. Some Victorian commentators argued that newspapers were subject to the equivalent of an election every time they went on sale, in contrast to politicians who were elected infrequently. Consequently, they claimed, the press was a fully representative institution, and should be accepted as a partner in the process of government. In some ambitious formulations of this role, the media are envisioned as

independent watchdogs, a social institution, the Fourth Estate of government, business, religion, education, and family – serve the public (Baran, S.J. and Davis, D.K., (2006). Suffice it to say that even though the concept of the Fourth Estate was formulated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when environmental conservation was not yet topical, their (media) potency and legitimacy to influence change and development make them a critical cog in the management of the environment. Media also throw critical searchlight on the abuse of the environment. In Zimbabwe, print media provide coverage of environmental news. The focus of the fourth estate in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had to do with the power of communication, right to information. Apparently, journalists contend that they still uphold the ethos of the fourth estate, of communicating information and apprising societies of local, national and international events.

The study is premised on the reporting of environmental issues by the print media in Zimbabwe, and in this case, *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail*. These papers are weeklies and they command a wide reading among Zimbabweans, particularly the urbanites and those in peri-urban areas like Goromonzi district, Mashonaland East Province. The thrust of the study is to interrogate the reportage, that is, the framing of environmental news stories in the weeklies and whether reporters have considered indigenous methods and/or knowledge of environmental management. News is informed by the news values which a particular media house chooses to give prominence.

Whilst acknowledging the importance of environmental management to the well-being of any given society; the approaches adopted by various societies and communities tend to differ. At the advent of colonialism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the indigenous knowledge systems were brutally attacked and disparaged by the colonialists as they sort to foist their ‘scientific’ methods of environmental management on the indigenous people. As the colonial administration was employing force; the media adopted the “follow the flag” concept whereby the media pander to the whims and caprices of the rulers. Environmental management is a developmental issue which has profound effects on the economics, politics, social wellbeing of societies and nations, national security and peace. The writer selected a sample of environmental stories from the three weeklies, and they were analysed in areas of choice of words employed, preferred meanings, if there were any omissions it would be mentioned, and lastly, whether the story expanded or limited debate.

### **1.1 Purpose of the study**

The study seeks to interrogate Zimbabwe's print media's (*Daily News on Sunday*, *Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail*) coverage of environmental issues. The study will evaluate the depth of coverage of environmental issues. Having established the state of environmental reporting in the country, the study will endeavour to proffer suggestions to improve on the press' shortcomings in environmental reporting, if any.

### **1.2 Background of the study**

The continent of Africa prior to the advent of colonialism relied on oral communication to convey messages on a wide array of subjects, for example, the birth of a child or the death of a chief. In their dealings with the environment of which they were also a part, they would communicate through myths or taboos, inter alia. This form of communication had its strengths as well as weaknesses. Colonialism was a double-edged sword that is, dispossessing natives of their land and other resources but delivering to them new and 'better' methods of communication in the form of the press, radio and television.

Printing has a long history, with the earliest world's earliest printer printed fragments to survive coming from China being a product of the Han Dynasty (before AD 220). The technology of printing on cloth in China was adapted to paper under the influence of Buddhism which mandated the circulation of standard translations over a wide area, as well as the production of multiple copies of key texts for religious reasons. History states that Johannes Gutenberg, a German developed European movable type printing technology with the printing press around 1439 and in just over a decade, the European age of printing began. The high quality and relatively low price of the Gutenberg Bible (1455) established the superiority of movable type, and printing presses rapidly spreading across Europe, leading up to the Renaissance.

Whilst Europe was witnessing this technological development in the area of printing, Africa was still stuck in oral communication. Colonialists and missionaries later brought the technology to the African continent. According to DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989) apart



from writing, one of the greatest human accomplishments of all time was the development of printing. Prior to the fifteenth century, people reproduced books in Europe by preparing *manuscripti*, copies of existing books laboriously by hand. DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach assert that printing brought a fantastic change. Hundreds or even thousands of copies of a particular book could be reproduced with great precision.

DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (ibid) posit that by the end of the nineteenth century it was becoming clear to the pioneer social scientists of the time that the new mass media – newspapers, books and magazines, all of which were widely used in society – were bringing important changes in the human condition. These media represented a new form of communication that influenced not only patterns of interaction in communities and societies but the psychological outlooks of individuals as well. Charles Horton Cooley, an American sociologist cited in DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (ibid) stated that there were four factors that made the new media far more efficient than the communication processes of an earlier society. The new media were more effective, he said, in terms of

*Expressiveness*, in that they carry a broad range of ideas and feelings  
*Permanence of record*, or the overcoming of time  
*Swiftness*, or the overcoming of space  
*Diffusion*, or access to all classes of men

They further pointed out that these features of the (print) news media, which had come into existence in the nineteenth century, had forever changed the mental outlooks of those who used them.

According to Caple and Bednarek (2013) news-discourse is a social and cultural institution among many others, and it shares their characteristics in important ways. It is, literally, made of words and pictures, so comprising a specially differentiated sub-system within language. News comes to the audience as the pre-existing discourse of an impersonal social institution which is also an industry. As audiences get used to its codes and conventions they become ‘news-literate’ – not only able to follow the news and recognise its familiar cast of characters and events, but also spontaneously able to interpret the world at large in terms of the codes they would have learnt from the news.

Newspapers are critical in disseminating various forms of information, knowledge and entertainment. Society becomes informed about its environment through the communication provided by the press. Underlying Williams' criticism of British capitalist society is his view of the nature of the relationship between a society and its mode of communication. The development of powerful new means of communication in modern times means that there should be a change in the way in which society is defined. Traditionally, society has been described in terms of politics (power and government) and economics (property, production, and trade). Society today can also be understood as a form of communication, through which experience is described, shared, modified, and preserved. He believes that the definition of society and human existence cannot be confined to political and economic contexts. A central and necessary part of social reality is the need to learn, to describe, to understand, and to educate. Thus, what is termed society today is not only a network of political and economic arrangements, but also a process of learning and communication.

According to Jansen and Steinberg (1991) the content of mass communication should be directed at continuous permanent education aimed at the full development of each member of the community and the growth and development of society to its maximum potential. This education should come in the form of programmes on health and family care, adult education, the conservation of the environment, and urban planning to meet the needs of the public for recreation. The first newspapers in Africa date back to 1797 in Egypt, 1800 in South Africa, 1801 in Sierra Leone, and 1826 in Liberia – where returning slaves from the Americas set up the *Liberia Herald* to celebrate the brilliance of freedom as a gift from heaven. Nyamnjoh (2005) posits that missionaries were also at the forefront of the first newspapers, which were often published either in the colonial language or in indigenous languages, and a major dimension of which was news and information of a religious and evangelical nature.

The advent of colonialism in Zimbabwe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century gave birth to the development of the press in the country. Barton (1979) records that as Cecil John Rhodes pushed north with his dream of planting the British flag (and building a money-making railway) all the way from Cape Town to Cairo, the *Argus* was among his most ardent camp followers. Rhodes' men – 180 Pioneers, 200 of his British South Africa Company's Police and a raggle-taggle of prospectors reached the cool Mashonaland plains on 10 September 1890. In June 1891, the

Argus Company sent William Fairbridge up from Johannesburg as their representative. He did much more than just send reports of the new settlement back south for transmission to Britain; on June 27 he filled a German sausage-skin with treacle and glue, and using it as a roller, ran off the first handwritten copies of the *Mashonaland and Zambesian Times*, a crude but readable cyclostyled sheet. Barton (1979) states that the Argus imported more modern equipment by ox-wagon from the south and on 20 October 1892 the *Mashonaland and Zambesian Times* gave way to the *Rhodesian Herald*. Two years later, on 12 October 1894, the Argus started the Bulawayo Chronicle. The *Rhodesia Herald* was forthright and unapologetic about its mission which was “to promote social, economic and political interests of the white settler community”. However, there were some journalists who did not act in sync with the philosophy of white supremacy and were constantly at loggerheads with the establishment.

Newspapers and other print media are important in African societies, politics and developments today. After all, their role as instruments of political mobilisation in colonial and post-colonial Africa remains fresh in the memories of many. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that what people read makes a more lasting impression on them than what they hear or see on television, that they will rely on newspapers and periodicals to confirm news and present views. Hachten (1971) opined that under some circumstances it may be more desirable to reach and influence the educated few rather than the illiterate many. Hachten was referring to the educated segment of African society that controls the economy and makes key political decisions that go a long way in shaping the image of Africa and determining the nature of national development in African countries.

Some writers such as Barton (1979) were sceptical about the importance of the press on the African continent. He contended that the newspapers of Africa, certainly of Black Africa, were not the true mass media. That role, such as it is, belonged to the radio. The writer opted for the newspapers because of the permanence of the message in the newspaper as opposed to the radio where the message is always in transit. Cooley cited in Ball-Rokeach (1989) mentioned some of the advantages of the newspaper, which are:

- Expressiveness, in that they carry a broad range of ideas and feelings.

- Permanence of record, or the overcoming of time.

Writing in the twentieth century, Barton (1979) had postulated that millions of Africa's peoples who were to live out their lives as illiterates, would get their local news from their friends, and what the government wanted them to hear of the national and international news from the radio. UNESCO's Institute for Statistics estimated that 83.6% of Zimbabweans aged 15 years and older were literate in 2011. This estimate was based on Zimbabwe's 2011 Demographic and Health Survey results. With such literacy levels, people can definitely benefit from reading environmental news published in the newspapers. However, what remains blurred in the history of the development of the press in the then Rhodesia, is whether the colonial press gave any attention to environmental issues during that period. But from the characterisation of the colonial press by Barton (1979) it seems the press was solely preoccupied with promoting socio-economic and political interests of the white settler community.

Newspapers have always been a powerful source in the Gutenberg Galaxy because people read them as meaningful syntexts. This might explain why the press has always been able to influence the opinion of the masses. Danesi (2002) asserts that one of the foremost examples of the 'power of the press' came in 1974 when President Richard Nixon of the United States of America (USA) resigned his office after revelations about the Watergate scandal involving his administration, which had first been brought to public attention by the *Washington Post*. It is not surprising that the Watergate affair led to a rise in the popularity of investigative reporting, establishing it as a new genre in the newspapers syntext.

Zimbabwe has several newspaper titles, some of them fall under the public media whilst others are privately owned. The public media are owned by the Zimpapers. Zimpapers publishes nine newspaper titles and two magazines and one regional newspaper under a joint venture with the Namibian government. It now also has a broadcasting station, StarFM (2011). The titles in the Zimpapers stable are; *The Herald*(1891), *The Manica Post*(1893), *The Chronicle*(1894), *Sunday News*(1930),*The Sunday Mail*(1935), *Kwayedza*(1986), *New Farmer*(2002), *Trends*(2003), *Zimbabwean Travel*(2003), *Umthunywa*(2004), *Southern Times*(2004), *H-Metro*(2009), *B-Metro*(2010) and *BH24*(2013). Zimpapers (1980) Ltd is the

oldest newspaper and commercial printer in Zimbabwe. It is also the largest publisher of newspapers, having dominated the industry for almost 120 years. The *Sunday Mail* started publishing in 1935. It is distributed in Harare, Mutare, Bulawayo, Gweru and Masvingo. It targets the mass market. Its readership is mostly 22 – 60 year olds. The *Sunday Mail* has a content mix of news, features, arts and sports.

There are two media organisations which dominate the private media, namely; the Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (ANZ) and Alpha Media Holdings (AMH). The former publishes *Daily News* and *Daily News on Sunday*, whilst the latter publishes *NewsDay*, *Zimbabwe Independent* and *The Standard*. Another private newspaper, which however folded in March 2015 due to financial constraints, is *Zimbabwe Mail*. *The Financial Gazette* is another newspaper from the private media stable, it is owned by former Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe governor, Gideon Gono. It was once rated as one of the best financial newspapers in southern Africa. *The Financial Gazette* has had a change of ownership in the past couple of years owing to the retirement of founding owner, Elias Rusike, from active journalism. Rusike's Hamba Investment sold its entire stake to a group of businessmen led by former Editor-In-Chief Francis Mdlongwa, who had teamed up with Sylvester Saburi and Solomon Mtetwa. However, the consortium failed to raise enough money and Octadew, an investment company linked to Gideon Gono, snapped the stake. Although Gono has not publicly acknowledged that he is the owner of *The Financial Gazette*, his Editor-In Chief, Sunsleey Chamunorwa, implied that Gono is the sole owner of the paper when he wrote to refute allegations that the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) held shares in the company. The real ownership of the paper is shrouded in mystery, although Gono is said to own 70% and nominees - who include lawyer Florence Ziumbe and businessman, the late Jonathan Kadzura - hold the remaining 30%. The paper has a circulation of 26,000. It is printed at Tunatmore Printers.

The ownership and control of the press by either the state or private companies has a bearing on the content of the newspapers. As what obtained during the colonial period, the media today are also susceptible to manipulation by the state and owners. Advertisers can also influence the content of the press. The media get most of their revenue from advertisements. McQuail (2010) postulates that fundamental to an understanding of media structure is the

question of ownership and how the powers are exercised. The belief that ownership ultimately determines the nature of media is not just a Marxist theory but virtually a commonsense axiom summed up in Altschull's (1984) 'second law of journalism': 'the contents of the media always reflect the interests of those who finance them'. Zimbabwe's print media, be it public or private, have carried stories on environmental issues. Some of the newspapers have focussed on reporting on environmental issues pertaining to pollution of the atmosphere through industrial emissions or pollution of water bodies through siltation inter alia. Other newspapers, besides reporting on industrial pollution which usually affects the urban populations have also covered environmental stories in the rural areas.

The environmental journalist is expected to research extensively on environmental issues if at all he/she is to report effectively on environmental issues. Moyo et al. (eds) (1991) gave a fair characterisation of the Zimbabwean people's relationship with the environment prior to the arrival of the white men. Land was not a scarce resource for the population in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and earlier. Traditional methods of resource utilisation were well adapted to conservation. The scale of subsistence agriculture, trade, mining and quarrying imposed little stress upon the environment, except on the fertile well-watered but steep slopes of the Eastern Highlands where the Shona people initiated terracing as a soil conservation measure. They say that elsewhere, rotational modes of resource utilisation enabled on-going recovery of the resource base. Periodic droughts were the principal natural constraint to production, ameliorated by recourse to a wide variety of food sources, not all of which would succumb to drought. Wild animals and plants were important elements of food during periodic droughts. (Moyo et al., 1991).

The environmental discourse is usually informed by the modern methods of environmental management. The impression one gets is that prior to colonialism, the natives were ignorant of or had no regard for environmental conservation. However, a critical study of Shona societies would reveal that the natives have always had the knowledge and appreciation of the importance of the environment to human existence. Their methods could be different from the modern methods of conservation, but the end result, that is, conserving the environment, would be almost the same. When the media report on environmental issues they are usually

informed by the modern school of environmental management. It is probable that an environmental journalist may unwittingly, and at times wittingly, may have a disdain of knowledge coming from unofficial sources as it were.

The scope of what constitutes environmental management has been broadened due to the transformations of the Zimbabwean society through colonialism. Things which could harm the environment have also increased in number. According to Chenje (1998), the major environmental issues confronting Zimbabwe today are:

- Growing poverty and its attendant problems of resource overexploitation.
- Land degradation due to both human activities and natural phenomena, and the impact these have on food security
- Continued loss of forests due to overexploitation.
- Conservation of biodiversity to minimise losses as a result of human activities. The country has seen several of its floral and faunal species become endangered.
- Threat of alien species such as the water hyacinth in some of the country's water bodies, for example, Lake Chivero.
- Water scarcity due to variability of rainfall and ineffective water management measures, including pricing and pollution control.
- Atmospheric pollution due to industrialisation and other factors.
- Drought and climate change.

Whilst all forms of media are important in informing and educating society about the importance of conserving the environment, the study focused on the print media, that is, *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail*.

According to the Southern Africa Development Community/International Union for Conservation of Nature/Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SADC/IUCN/SARDC) (1998), the environmental journalist in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region has endless angles from which the issue of biodiversity can be tackled. In addition to writing about diversity's contribution to tourism and the economy in general, the journalist can also write about continued loss of habitats due

to clearance of land for agriculture; replacement of genetically-diverse traditionally cultivated varieties (landraces) by hybrid seeds; clearance of forests to cure tobacco (can this be compared with the contribution of tobacco to the economy); destruction of trees by species such as the elephant; overexploitation of species; introduction of species.

Cox (2010) posits that environmental communication is a type of symbolic action that serves two functions. Those functions are pragmatic and constitutive. Environmental communication is pragmatic because it helps individuals and organizations to accomplish goals and literally do things through communication. Examples of this include educating, alerting, persuading and collaborating. Environmental communication is constitutive because it helps to shape people's understandings of environmental issues, themselves, and Nature; it shapes the meanings people hold of these things. Examples of this include values, attitudes, and ideologies in relation to Nature and environmental issues and problems.

Editors and proprietors of media organizations are not the only ones who can affect the content of the media, be it electronic or print media. The consequences of advertising financing for media content are perennially discussed. On the one hand, it is obvious that the structure of much of the mass media industry in most capitalist countries reflects the interests of advertisers – something that has developed historically along with other social and economic changes. It is no accident that media markets often coincide with other consumer divisions. Most free-market media are finely tuned to jointly maximizing the needs of advertisers and their own interests as a normal condition of operation (McQuail, 2005).

### **1.3 Formulation of the Research Problem**

Kumar and Murck (1996) postulate that the environmental imperative affects individuals in many ways. All individuals require environmental goods. Most immediately, these goods include clean air, drinkable water, and a secure and sufficient food supply. In an absolute sense, and on a global scale, the Earth's resources are abundant and fertile; yet in some parts of the world, severe shortages and contamination of vital resources impinge on the well-being of people. It is against this background that it becomes imperative that communities and



societies be informed and educated about environmental challenges and sustainable development. It is the media which has the capacity to disseminate information at a larger scale to many people, usually in the shortest possible time. Some researchers have argued that the media usually pay lip service to environmental reporting. The Inagural Ranking Report (January 2013) stated that when the frequency of reporting on environmental issues is compared to reporting on celebrities or entertainment-related topics, it becomes apparent that there is need for many mainstream news sources to reconsider what issues they prioritise. This observation can be buttressed by weighing the coverage of environmental stories against the coverage of other news beats like that on celebrities, politics, sport and scandals. Environmental news should be relevant to all peoples of the world, because they all have the responsibility to conserve their environment. Environmental news should resonate with their environmental ethos and cultural values. Georgia Magni (2016) contends that indigenous communities around the world are constantly struggling to maintain their rights, their traditions and their knowledge, in a system still dominated by a western worldview. They face the challenge of living in two worlds, the indigenous and the non-indigenous one, in constant tension with each other, with the latter having more power in shaping the former. For centuries, indigenous populations have suffered from invasion and oppression, and oftentimes they have seen their knowledge eclipsed by western knowledge, imposed on them through western institutions such as the education system and the media. Yet, indigenous populations have managed to survive for centuries adapting in many different ways to adverse climate conditions and managing to create sustainable livelihood systems. Their diverse forms of knowledge, deeply rooted in their relationships with the environment as well as in cultural cohesion, have allowed many of these communities to maintain a sustainable use and management of natural resources, to protect their environment and to enhance their resilience; their ability to observe, adapt and mitigate has helped many indigenous communities face new and complex circumstances that have often severely impacted their way of living and their territories. Shiva (1989) cited by Adams and Mulligan gave a brilliant characterisation of the impact of colonialism on the environment and its conservation. He states that, at its height, the British Empire was the most impressive example of colonialism ever constructed. Its global reach was unparalleled, its legacy enduring. It transformed political relations, economies, ethnicities and social relations, sometimes quickly and almost everywhere profoundly. It also transformed nature, creating new landscapes, new ecologies and new relations between humans and non-human nature; in the process, it created new ideologies of those relationships. Whereas the media have demonstrated evident enthusiasm

in covering other news genres like politics, economics and sport; there seems to be a dearth in environmental reporting. The investigative journalism exhibited in other news beats such as politics and economics is glaringly absent in environmental reporting.

#### **1.4 Goal and Objectives of the Study**

This study is both exploratory and descriptive in nature. The exploratory dimension was adopted considering that not much has been written on the possible role of the print media in reporting on environmental issues. The researcher's goal in this study was to formulate some questions which future research may address.

##### **Main objective:**

To analyse and evaluate Zimbabwe print media's role in covering environmental issues.

##### **Sub objectives:**

The sub objectives seek to:

- Analyse Zimbabwean print media's editorial policies on environmental issues.
- Interrogate the role of media in reporting environmental issues.
- Ascertain whether the media houses and journalists appreciate the importance of environmental reporting.
- Analyse and assess possible challenges faced by journalists in covering environmental issues.

The study adopted applied research. According to Kumar (2014) most of the research in the social sciences is applied. He posits that the research techniques, procedures and methods that form the body of research methodology are applied to the collection of information about various aspects of a situation, issue, problem or phenomenon so that the information gathered can be used in other ways – such as for policy formulation, administration and the enhancement of understanding of a phenomenon.

## **1.5 Formulation of the sub-problems or research questions**

The analysis of newspapers' content will focus on exploring the following questions:

- What are the perspectives in the coverage of environmental issues by Zimbabwe's print media?
- Are environmental stories given prominence in the print media?
- Are journalists employing appropriate genres, that is, hard news and soft news, analytic or literary, in environmental reporting?
- Is there balance in the selection of news sources on environmental issues?

## **1.6 Relevance of the study**

Environmental reporting is critical to Zimbabwe's national development, whether economic, social or political. The environment is a contested space where all and sundry contend for a share. However, its existence is dependent on the people's awareness and knowledge on how to manage it for social and economic reasons. It is in this context that the print media becomes an important cog in national development in terms of awareness and education. McQuail (2010) postulates that the media can best be used in a planned way to bring about change by applying them in large scale programmes of development. The study becomes relevant in the sense that it seeks to interrogate the print media's role in the reportage of the environment. The study, it is assumed that it may prod media houses to reconsider news values which make environmental stories newsworthy. Even news sources for environmental sources might need to be revisited. The study is also relevant in the sense that it may broaden the horizons of journalism training; that is, adopting an afrocentric approach to environmental reporting.

## **1.7 Relationship of the topic to the discipline of Communication**

The topic which is focusing on the role of the print media in communicating information to the general populace on the importance of environmental management apparently has a strong relationship to the discipline of Communication. The media's task is to extend public education and promote innovation in environmental management, agriculture, health practice, population control and other social and economic factors. The topic, to a certain extent throws a challenge to the print media to revisit the whole gamut of environmental reporting; questioning the prominence accorded to environmental reporting.

## **1.8 Justification of the study**

There are a number of factors which have motivated the researcher to study the reporting of the environment by the print media. Suffice it to say that reporting to and providing the public with information on the environment is becoming increasingly important for governmental and non-governmental agencies at regional, national and international levels. Whereas an appreciation of the importance of the environment to human survival is unequivocal, the reporting of environmental issues by the media seems to be lethargic.

In view of the foregoing information, this research is important in the sense that it interrogates the role of the media in making environmental issues a public agenda, government agenda, business agenda and media agenda. James Curray cited in McQuail (2010) proposed an alternative to the dominant view of communication as transmission in the form of a 'ritual' model, and he has also advocated an approach to communication and society in which culture is allotted a more central place. He contends that social life is more than power and trade... it also includes the sharing of aesthetic experience, religious ideas, personal values and sentiments, and intellectual notions – a ritual order (Carey, 1988). Accordingly, Carey defined communication as 'a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed' (1988).

## **1.9 Literature Review**

This study is based on the role of the press in covering environmental issues in Zimbabwe. Whereas there is substantive information on environmental reporting from a modern ‘scientific’ perspective, there seems to be a dearth of the same with regard to indigenous knowledge systems perspective. It is an undisputable fact that the Zimbabwean media, both print and electronic have covered conferences and workshops on environmental management, disasters and sundry.

According to Harriss, Leiter and Johnson (1992) newspapers pay attention to the weather story every day now, not just when there is a blizzard or thunderstorms that send creeks and rivers over their banks. And many newspapers send their reporters to seminars and short courses in meteorology and climatology to help them improve their ability to write about the weather accurately and authoritatively. In this context, environmental journalists are expected to cover environmental issues holistically; this brings balance and objectivity to environmental stories which would appear in the newspapers. Sound environmental reporting goes beyond the provision of statistics by experts, instead it should be cognisant of some socio-economic, political and cultural factors which may have a direct or indirect bearing on environmental issues of a place. Furthermore, the environmental journalist should be conscious to the fact that the environment beat has the potential of capturing and/or engaging other latent knowledge bases on environmental issues. Local communities may have some knowledge or experience on environmental matters which could be of benefit to other communities both at national and regional levels.

An extensive presentation and discussion of related literature is presented in chapter two of this study. The theories are agenda-setting, framing and development media theory.

## **1.10 Agenda setting theory**

The agenda setting theory is appropriate for this study since it helps to show the influence the media can have on individuals and institutions that depend on them for information. This theory was originally conceived to study and analyse political matters, for instance, elections.

The term “agenda-setting” was coined by McCombs and Shaw (2004) to describe in more general terms a phenomenon that had long been noticed and studied in the context of election campaigns. McQuail (2005) says that Lazarsfeld et al. (1944) referred to agenda-setting as the power to ‘structure issues’. For instance, a situation in which politicians seek to convince voters as to what from their party standpoint, are the most important issues. According to McQuail, this is an essential part of advocacy and attempts at opinion shaping. He, however, posits that as a hypothesis, it seems to have escaped the general conclusion that persuasive campaigns have small or no effects. As Trenaman and McQuail (1961) pointed out: ‘The evidence strongly suggests that people think about what they are told..... but at no level do they think what they are told’. The evidence at that time and since collected consists of data showing a correspondence between the order of importance given in the media to ‘issues’ and the order of significance attached to the same issues by the public and the politicians. This is the essence of the agenda-setting hypothesis, but such evidence is insufficient to show a causal connection between the various issue ‘agendas’.

As already alluded to, the agenda-setting theory was conceived by theorists who wanted to know whether political campaigns had a direct impact on election outcomes. Of essence, McCombs and Shaw (2004) found out that there was a high level of correspondence between the amount of attention given to a particular issue in the press and the level of importance assigned to that issue by people in the community who were exposed to the media. This did not mean that the press was successful in swaying their audiences to adopt any particular point of view, but it was successful in bringing people to regard some issues as more important than others. The agenda of the press did become the agenda of the public. Severin and Tankard (1992) assert that researchers before McCombs and Shaw (2004) had stated some ideas that were very similar to the agenda-setting hypothesis. A rather direct statement of the agenda-setting idea appears in the 1958 article by Long:

In a sense, the newspaper is the prime mover in setting the territorial agenda. It has a great part in determining what most people will be talking about, what most people will think the facts are, and what most people will regard as the way problems are to be dealt with. (Long, 1958, p.260)

In buttressing Long's assertion above, Lang and Lang also came up with a statement of the agenda-setting idea:

The mass media force attention to certain issues. They build up public images of political figures. They are constantly presenting objects suggesting what individuals in the mass should think about, know about, have feelings about. (Lang & Lang, 1959, p. 232)

Another statement of the agenda-setting idea that is repeated in almost every book or article on the topic is this statement by Bernard Cohen about the power of the press:

*It may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about. (Cohen, 1963, p.13).*

Some scholars have sought to equate another theory that is, framing, as another level of agenda-setting. Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss, and Ghanem (1991, p. 3) have described a media frame as "the central organising idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration." Entman (1993, p. 52) contends that "to frame is to *select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation* for the item described." McCombs (1997, p.37) has suggested that in the language of the second level of agenda setting, "framing is the selection of a restricted number of thematically related attributes for inclusion on the media agenda when a particular object is discussed."

Not all scholars concur that second-level agenda setting is equivalent to framing, at least not to more abstract, or macrolevel, framing. Gamson (1992) has conceived of framing in terms of a "signature matrix" that includes various condensing symbols (catchphrases, taglines, exemplars, metaphors, depictions, visual images) and reasoning devices (causes and consequences, appeals to principles or moral claims). Some would argue that second-level agenda setting is more similar to the first part of this matrix than to the second, because it is easier to think of condensing symbols as attributes of a given object but more difficult to think of reasoning devices as attributes (Weaver, McCombs, and Shaw, 2004).

The theory of agenda setting has maintained continuous growth for over thirty years, this is due to its compatibility and parallels with other theories. It has incorporated concepts such as gate-keeping or completed conceptually including the theory based on public opinion of the spiral of silence. The convergence of the basic idea of agenda-setting and framing has been recognised by researchers for a long time in many fields, including media. Attributes of agenda-setting are integrated into research about Framing theory. So that the agenda-setting makes the selection that determines about what to think, the framing establishes the mechanisms that make how to think and, as a result of the whole process, through priming acquired arguments to decide what to think (Weaver, 2007). These points of cohesion are the frames and framing processes, the effects of framing, the attributes of the agenda, the dynamics of the processes of agenda-setting, contingency conditions and influence of agenda-setting and its effects (McCombs & Ghanem, 2003). Entman et al. (1993: 51) posits that “in the language of the agenda-setting, framing is the construction of an agenda with the selection of a limited number of issues in order to create a coherent picture of a particular object”. The media are expected to come up with meaningful agenda setting, identifying the key issues of the day vis-à-vis environmental management, including the forces that have formed and may resolve them (McQuail, Golding and Bens, 2005).

It is assumed or suggested that if the print media, and in this case, *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail*, were to draw the attention of readers to more and relevant environmental news of environmental management, perhaps communities or societies would become responsible and responsive to the task or duty of managing the environment effectively and efficiently. In the same way they (the media) do in politics in transforming the media agenda into public agenda, they could possibly do the same in the area of environmental management.

### **1.11 Framing theory**

The characterisation of news as a window on the world and through its frame, shows that people learn of themselves and others, of their institutions, leaders, and life styles, and those of other nations and their peoples. By seeking to disseminate information that people want, need, and should know, news organisations both circulate and shape knowledge. The news



media play an important role in the news consumers' setting of a political agenda. Those topics given the most coverage by the news media are likely to be the topics audiences identify as the most pressing issues of the day. Golan, Johnson and Wanta (eds.) (2010) postulate that contextual (extrinsic) factors – such as political or economic conditions and press freedom – have been shown to influence news content, but not news frames.

Media frames provide structures for the working routines of journalists and news organisations in their efforts to organise, interpret, and present information efficiently to their audiences (e.g., Entman, 1993; Gamson, 1989; Gitlin, 1980; Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Defined as “a central organising idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events....” a frame first of all offers an organisational structure and reportorial essence to an event that has no inherent meaning (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987: 143). Entman (1993) posits that media frames “promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p.52) through their emphasis of certain facets of an event to the exclusion of others.

How news frames are adopted also depends on the interplay of the various competing factors in the same issue. For instance, arguing that national interests affect international news discourse and that issues are framed accordingly. Lee and Young (1995) showed how news coverage of a Chinese student movement was framed with respect to each country's national interest, such as economic impact (Japan) or ideological concern (U.S.). Since Japan had a closer economic relationship with China, the media in Japan adopted an “economic impact” frame in its coverage of the student movement. Therefore, it is inferred that economic conditions and economic relations may affect the media's news frame. It is logical to expect that the economic factor would link with the discussion of threat on economy as a major news frame.

Whereas the “first level” of agenda setting is focused on the relative salience (usually operationally defined as perceived importance) of issues or subjects, the “second level” which is framing, examines the relative salience of attributes of issues (McCombs, 2005 and Ghanem, 1997). These agendas of attributes have been called “the second level” of agenda

setting to distinguish them from the first level that has traditionally focused on issues (objects), although the term “level” implies that attributes are more specific than objects, which is not always the case. The perspectives and frames that journalists employ draw attention to certain attributes of the objects of news coverage, as well as to the objects themselves, and some of these perspectives can be very general (e.g., a “Cold War” frame). In the *Journal of Communication*, the authors employ a number of definitions of framing, including problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations, as well as key themes, phrases, and words. The constructionist approach to framing argues that “framing incorporates a wider range of factors than priming and agenda setting, which are both cognitive concepts,” and that “frames are tied in with culture as a macrosocietal structure.”

Weaver (1997-1998) asserts that there are similarities between second-level agenda setting and framing, even if they are not identical processes. Both are more concerned with how issues or other objects, people, groups, organisations, countries, etc.) are depicted in the media than with which issues or objects are more or less prominently reported. Both focus on the most salient or prominent aspects or themes or descriptions of the objects of interest. Both are concerned with ways of thinking rather than objects of thinking. But framing does seem to include a broader range of cognitive processes – such as moral evaluations, causal reasoning, appeals to principles, and recommendations for treatment of problems - than does second-level agenda setting (the salience of attributes of an object).

In Zimbabwe, the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) raised concern over the building of a shopping mall by a Chinese company (Long Cheng) on a wetland in Harare. Since Zimbabwe has close economic ties with China, the issue of the management of wetlands adopted an economic frame. The Minister of Tourism argued that they could not deny the Chinese the right to build the shopping mall in the simple interest of trying to preserve the lives of frogs inhabiting the wetland. In the case of environmental reporting, journalists may choose to highlight certain “recommended” methods of curbing environmental degradation whilst ignoring other methods which could also help in effectively managing the environment. News production, frames are the persistent selection, emphasis, and exclusion of news. Frames enable journalists to process large amounts of information

quickly and routinely package the information for efficient relay to their audiences. For a journalist reporting on environmental or any other issue, there are certain factors which play a big role. Scheufele (1999), who adopts Shoemaker and Reese's (1996) hierarchy of influence hypotheses, suggests five factors that can influence media framing: social norms and values, organisational pressures and constraints, pressures of interest groups, journalistic routines, and the individual journalist's ideological or political orientations.

As already highlighted in this chapter, environmental news competes with other forms of news, for example, politics, for space in the newspaper. The journalist, being cognisant of the media house's news values, decides what to write and what to give prominence. Prominence accorded to issues can be determined by the genre which the reporters may choose to employ, for example, hard news or soft news. According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, soft news, also called market-centred journalism, is journalistic style and genre that blurs the line between information and entertainment. Although the term *soft news* was originally synonymous with feature stories placed in newspapers or television newscasts for human interest, the concept expanded to include a wide range of media outlets that present more personality-centred stories. Traditionally, so-called hard news relates the circumstances of a recent event or incident considered to be of general local, regional, national, or international significance. By contrast, soft news usually centres on the lives of individuals and has little, if any, perceived urgency. Hard news generally concerns issues, politics, economics, international relations, welfare, and scientific developments, whereas soft news focuses on human-interest stories and celebrity.

### **1.12 Development media theory**

The mass media are important cogs in the dissemination of culture of which environmental management is also a part. Samovar, Porter and McDaniel (2007) say that when they speak of mass media they are talking about those forms of media that are created, designed, and used to reach very large audiences. The impact of these devices on a population is now common knowledge. As Thompson points out, the mass media do much more than supply entertainment:

Few people would deny that the nature of cultural experience in modern societies has been profoundly affected by the development of mass communication. Books, magazines and newspapers, radio, television, the cinema, records, tapes and videos: these and other forms of mass communication occupy a central role in our lives. (Samover, Porter, and McDaniel, 2007).

Siebert et al. (1956) expounded on the four press theories, namely; Libertarian theory, Authoritarian theory, Soviet theory and Social Responsibility theory. These four theories evolved in varied geographical and historical contexts and addressing issues to do with the role of the press as well as its relationship with the state. The development media theory evolved from the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) debate of the early 80s.

However, the Third World countries were of the opinion that the media were not really promoting development in ways which were not entirely or exclusively informed by development theories such as the modernisation theory. Some researchers have opined that the media in their current form are elitist. Eaman (1987) postulates that most media researchers would reject the claim that the selection, gathering, and presentation of news are objective processes in the sense that they are determined primarily by the nature of reality itself. On the contrary, they would argue that it is not the attributes of events themselves, but the nature of news production, that determines whether something is newsworthy and how it is covered. Eaman (1987: 50-51) avers that news serves elites less through “the wilful, intentional bias of editors and newscasters” than through “the institutionalised ethos of the news media as a whole.

Whereas the agenda setting role of the media was basically to draw the attention of the audience or readers to an “important” issue or topic; the development media theory was formulated so as to act as an agent for socio-economic development inter alia whilst taking cognisance of political and cultural needs and background of individual countries in the Third World. McQuail (2010) postulates that the starting point for a separate ‘development theory’ of mass media is the fact of some common circumstances of developing countries that limit the application of other theories or that reduce their potential benefits. One circumstance is the absence of some of the conditions necessary for a developed mass communication

system: the communication infrastructure; the professional skills; the production and cultural resources; the available audience. Another related factor is the dependence on the developed world for what is missing in the way of technology, skills and cultural products. Thirdly, there is (variable) devotion of these societies to economic, political and social development as a primary national task, to which other institutions should submit. Fourthly, it is increasingly the case that developing countries are aware of their similar identity and interests in international politics.

### **1.14 Expectations for the media**

Audiences rely on the media for information, education and entertainment. They expect the media to furnish them with facts and figures about politics, economics, the weather, climate, inter alia. But the media have to employ certain styles or conventions of writing for them to be able to convey messages which would interest or help the reader in comprehending his/her environment. SADC/IUCN/SARDC posit that communicating the environment is a challenge for the environmental journalist – he or she has to be good at what he/she does. Parroting scientific information, regurgitating it in news articles does not give the readers a picture of what has happened and why it has happened. A discerning environmental journalist should help get off the beaten path, and question the usual to discover what lies behind so many of the things which ordinary people, officials, ‘experts’ and journalists take for granted. A good journalist should help “demystify” environmental terminology to everyday use. The journalist should create and raise awareness of the issues among readers since no single environmental terminology means exactly the same to everyone. The realisation that there was a genuine need to have African journalists who could cover environmental stories gave birth to the African Network of Environmental Journalists (ANEJ). According to UNEP (2006), ANEJ was established with the aim of mainstreaming environmental reporting in Africa. It focuses on enhancing the capacity of African journalists to deal with new and emerging environmental challenges; providing extra leverage for the dissemination of information on environmental issues in the region. Another responsibility was promoting the web-based journalism on environmental and sustainable development in Africa and influencing the decision-making process relating to environmental policies in Africa.

While water professionals and academics may get their information through peer-reviewed publications, specialist websites and water workshops, the public obtains knowledge of water management from television, radio, newspapers, magazines and sometimes through opinion leaders in their communities. The Internet is also becoming a useful tool in the search for knowledge about water resources due to its ability to offer access to large and varied amounts of information, although this can also be a liability, causing information overload. (SARDC, 2009). The use of appropriate genres, for example, analytic or literary, as is the case with health reporting, tends to inform and/or educate readers effectively. Media scholars have highlighted that within the scope of environmental communication are the genres of nature writing, science writing, environmental literature, environmental interpretation and environmental advocacy.

### **1.15 Methodology**

The researcher will employ the qualitative method in this study. This study focuses on analysing and evaluating environmental news which was published by the three weeklies in 2014 from January to December. It looks at the quantity of news stories on environment each weekly published; the prominence given to stories, their placement in the newspaper, and genres (analytical or literary). The researcher opted for qualitative research for this study; this was dictated by the nature of information being researched. The newspapers were accessed from the Belvedere Technical Teachers College library and the National Archives of Zimbabwe.

Kumar (ibid) says the qualitative approach is embedded in the philosophy of empiricism; it follows an open, flexible and unstructured approach to enquiry and aims to explore diversity rather than to quantify. Keyton (2001) asserts that qualitative research serves to preserve the form and content of human interaction. These preservations, often in the form of text, are analysed for their qualities but not subjected to mathematical transformations, as is the case with quantitative research (Lindolf, 1995). Rather, qualitative research methods emphasise empirical, inductive, and interpretive approaches applied to interaction within a specific context.

The study employed both the exploratory and descriptive approaches. According to Kumar (2014) exploratory research is when a study is undertaken with the objective either of exploring an area where little is known or of investigating the possibilities of undertaking a particular research study. Kumar posits that in many situations a study could have multiple objectives, that is, some parts of it could be descriptive, some correlational, and some explanatory.

Content analysis was employed to analyse the *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail* stories on environmental management. According to Neuman (2000), content analysis is a technique for gathering and analysing the content of text. The content refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated. The text is anything written, visual, or spoken that serves as a medium for communication. It includes books, newspaper or magazine articles, advertisements, speeches, official documents, films or videotapes, musical lyrics, photographs, articles of clothing, or works of art. Gorman and Clayton (2005) posit that content analysis is another approach to textual data analysis in qualitative enquiries. This classifies textual material by reducing it to more relevant, manageable bits of data. The authors assert that content analysis on its own is more strictly a quantitative method as it involves measuring selected units of text and drawing comparisons. They however, state that when used in tandem with other qualitative data analysis methods, it offers a supplementary approach to qualitative text coding. One of the advantages of content analysis is its potential to identify trends occurring over long periods of time. In this study, the reporting of environmental stories in different newspapers over a 12 month period will be studied trying to understand the print media's readiness or willingness to cover environmental issues. Baran (2011) questions what happens to journalistic integrity to community service, to the traditional role of newspapers in American democracy, when front pages are given over to reports of starlets' affairs, sports heroes' retirements, and full-colour photos of plane wrecks because this is what younger readers want. He further questions the kind of culture that develops on a diet of soft news (sensational stories that do not serve the democratic function of journalism); rather than hard news (stories that help citizens to make intelligent decisions and keep up with important issues of the day). Baran posits that the "softening" of newspapers raises a potential media literacy issue. The media literate person has an obligation to be aware of the impact

newspapers have on individuals and society and to understand how the text of newspapers offers insight into contemporary culture.

To complement content analysis, the study also used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Van Dijk (1998) posits that CDA is concerned with studying and analysing written and spoken texts to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias. It examines how these discursive sources are maintained and reproduced within specific social, political and historical contexts. The study analysed and interpreted the reporter's and sources' choice of words as used in the environmental news stories. Issues of inclusion and exclusion of certain ideas, opinions, perspectives and perceptions matter in discourse; these were observed and interrogated with the help of CDA. The study dealt exclusively with the analysis and interpretation of environmental news stories which were published which were published in the three weekly newspapers, hence it did not venture into employing questionnaires or interviews.

### **1.16 Population**

Wimmer and Dominick (1997) state that one goal of scientific research is to describe the population – that is, a group or a class of subjects, variables, concepts, or phenomena. In some cases, this can be done by investigating an entire class or group, such as a study of prime time television programmes during a certain specified period. Studying every member or every copy of a newspaper may be cost-prohibitive and may in fact confound the research because measurements of large numbers of people often affect measurement quality. The population for the study are the newspapers published in Zimbabwe. However, the accessible newspapers in this instance are the *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail*. A sample was drawn for the newspapers.



### **1.17 Sample**

A sample is a subset of the population that is representative of the entire population. (Wimmer and Dominick, 1997). According to Maree, K. (ed) (2007) sampling refers to the process used to select a portion of the population for study. Qualitative research is generally based on non-probability and purposive sampling rather than probability or random sampling approaches. This study focused on environmental news stories, be it hard or soft news which was published in *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail* (January 2014 to December 2014).

### **1.18 Purposive sampling**

Maree (ibid) asserts that purposive sampling decisions are not only restricted to the selection of participants but also involves the settings, incidents, events and activities to be included for data collection. The researcher's unit of analysis are 26 issues of each weekly. Data were analysed and interpreted qualitatively.

### **1.19 Feasibility of the study**

This study was feasible because of the availability of the required materials, that is, all copies of *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail* of 2014. The researcher accessed the newspapers at Belvedere Technical Teachers' College and The National Archives of Zimbabwe.

### **1.20 ANTICIPATED FINDINGS**

This area explored probable findings of the current study, that is, strong and/or weak areas of the print media in the coverage of environmental management.

### **1.21 Anticipated findings**

It is anticipated that the research will establish that *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail* have carried stories on environmental management. Perhaps, the journalists' lack of knowledge about environmental issues causes the marginalisation of the beat in news reporting. This study may find that there are gaps in the journalism curriculum of training institutions in as far as environmental reporting is concerned.

### **1.22 Anticipated contribution of the study to the discipline of Communication**

This study, it is hoped that it will add another dimension to the discipline of communication by highlighting the importance of environmental management. It may also broaden the journalists' horizons of understanding and appreciation of communicating to audiences information and/or knowledge which is part of their culture; which they have employed in the sustainable utilisation of natural resources. Furthermore, the "traditional" confinement of the journalist to the 5Ws and an H when reporting environmental issues would be interrogated, thus possibly paving way to the writing of analytical or literary articles on environmental reporting.

### **1.23 Organisation of chapters**

Chapter one provided a background to the history of the print media, and environmental reporting. It spelt out the line of study, the purpose and justification of the study. As a way of conceptualising environmental reporting, the chapter discussed the relevant theories; it also presented preliminary related literature. It also discussed the methodology appropriate for the study.

Chapter two presented a comprehensive literature review. It discussed published literature on environmental reporting from several countries as a way of trying to establish and consolidate perspectives on environmental reporting.

Chapter three focused on methodology applied in this study.

Chapter four analysed and interpreted environmental stories which were published in the *Daily News on Sunday*.

Chapter five gave an analysis and interpretation of environmental news published in *The Financial Gazette*.

Chapter six provided an analysis and interpretation of environmental news which was published in *The Sunday Mail*.

Chapter seven analysed holistically information presented in the preceding three chapters (three to six). News stories on environmental issues were categorised so as to enable effective analysis, evaluation and interpretation. It endeavoured to give meaning to the findings, for example, the reporting of various environmental issues, for instance, climate change, poaching, invasion of wetlands, and land reclamation. It also provided recommendations aimed at promoting environmental reporting.

## **CHAPTER 2: Literature Review**

### **2. Introduction**

The thrust of this chapter is to present and discuss relevant literature on environmental reporting in Zimbabwe by the print media. To contextualise this literature review, it is important to highlight the fact that the press has and continues to cover environmental issues. According to UNEP (2006) the well-being of present and future populations depends on their attaining ecologically sustainable and socially equitable ways of living. While ecosystems adapt and evolve, humans are vulnerable, especially when ecosystem productivity drops. In order to reduce this vulnerability and increase the resilience of the poor there is need:

- To move away from a one-size-fits-all approach towards a more adaptable intervention strategy that embraces, understands and respects the complexity of ecosystems
- To ensure that intervention strategies do not fight against the dynamics of the ecosystems but rather work with them.

(UNEP, 2006: 15-16)

Basically, it is partly this realisation which has given impetus to the more meaningful and relevant efforts by countries and regional bodies like the African Union to come up with laws and/or policies to deal with environmental challenges.

According to Oliver C. Rappel, the main objective of the African Union's (AU) Revised (Algiers) Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, 2003 is to enhance environmental protection. It aims to foster the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, and to harmonise and coordinate policies in these fields with a view to achieving ecologically rational, economically sound and socially acceptable development policies and programmes. One of the aspects which the Convention addresses is traditional rights of local communities and indigenous knowledge. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is equally concerned about the management of natural resources. The SADC Protocol on Forestry advocates the active participation of all stakeholders and places responsibilities for its implementation at both national and regional levels. The protocol recognises intellectual property rights and aims to ensure equitable benefits from indigenous

knowledge systems (SADC, 2002). But for the national and regional citizens to know and have the awareness about varied environmental matters, there is need to have an efficient communication system, that is, the media. This chapter contends that whilst Zimbabwe's media publish some environmental news, the three weeklies have not fully acquitted themselves in giving prominence to environment news. Environmental management is at the core of national development or the existence of a country. There is a symbiotic relationship between humanity and the rest of flora and fauna. Recognising the role of the media in this matrix is critical because the media are the selectors, organisers and purveyors of information and/or knowledge which will be utilised by citizens and governments in the area of development. Hence this chapter explored the contributions of scholars and organisations with regard to environmental reporting.

## **2.1 Review of Related Literature on Environmental Reporting**

The Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC) in its analysis of the role of communication in Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) asserts that the media can facilitate communication between the public, policy-makers and those providing technical knowledge on the country's ecosystems. Communication through the media can be helpful in researching and articulating IWRM issues, showing the relevance of an integrated approach to water resources management to users. The Global Water Partnership (GWP) has defined the integrated approach to water resources management as "a process which promote the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources, in order to maximise the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems".

In the current definition, IWRM rests upon three principles that together act as the overall framework. These principles are:-

- Social equity: ensuring equal access for all users (particularly marginalised and poorer user groups) to an adequate quantity and quality of water necessary to sustain human well-being.

- Economic efficiency: bringing the greatest benefit to the greatest number of users possible with the available financial and water resources.
- Ecological sustainability: requiring that aquatic ecosystems are acknowledged as users and that adequate allocation is made to sustain their natural functioning.

Zimbabwe's print media take three broad forms/types, namely:

- a) Government controlled newspapers (ZIMPAPERS/NEW ZIANA)
- b) Privately owned and sponsored newspapers, and
- c) Brochures, posters and pamphlets produced by such organisations as the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) and the Forestry Commission (FC).

The process of producing feature articles on water management should transcend events-based reporting and the 5Ws and H (What, Where, When, Who, Why, and How) of basic journalism. Coverage is expected to provide a detailed, analytical insight into issues and focus on implications and likely impact. The environment is related to people's daily survival activities, and coverage should depict flora and fauna as primary resources that are integrally related to social and physical health, as well as to the economic livelihoods of people.

In the area of water, SARDC posits that planners need to think differently about using communication, education and public awareness, and making themselves accessible to journalists and broadcasters for interviews. Rather than just making scientific information available to the public, communication processes need to build awareness of rights and responsibilities, and how sustainable practices ultimately benefit long-term interests. In addition to the economic imperative, journalists are encouraged to address water holistically with a perspective on poverty eradication, the inclusion of social and cultural groups, and considering water as a human issue. The public look up to the media for information about their environment, hence the media should play a proactive role in covering environmental issues.

Chaguta (2010) postulates that a cursory look at Zimbabwe's media reveals a paucity of coverage of environmental issues. Characterised by a preponderance of political and economic reporting, the media in Zimbabwe seldom give environmental news prominence. Globally, environmental issues have increasingly become part of both public and political agendas and are widely reported in the media. Chaguta, however, asserts that African media appear to lag behind in their efforts to give prominence to environmental issues. According to Mutere (1991:13) cited in (Boafo, 1991) "... Environmental issues constitute a relatively marginal concern in most African newspapers, radio and television news, and current affairs programs. Much more attention is given to national politics, labour disputes, the arts, and business."

Revealing, perhaps, are the following excerpts from Okigbo (1995).

"The physical environment of Sub-Saharan Africa is prone to excessive abuse, but the political environment is even more abused..... Though management of the physical environment is of paramount importance in any serious discussion of sustainable development, the political environment deserves equal, if not more attention," (Okigbo, 1995: 21).

This goes to show how much importance is attached to politics at the detriment of physical environmental management. According to Okigbo it appears that it is already an accepted fact that politics should have pre-eminence over physical environmental issues. This perception goes on to manifest itself in the way the media report political and environmental news.

"Were the [African] media to be faced with the choice of covering either the natural or the political environment, they should, without any hesitation, choose the latter, for in the African context, the mismanagement of the political sphere is the more imminent calamity," (Okigbo, 1995: 30).

Okigbo's assertion contradicts the thrust of this study, which is to awaken or to make the media respond to the obligation of informing and educating the citizenry on the need to sustainably utilize the environment. If anything, Okigbo (1995) ought to be highlighting to the media that environmental news is equally important as political or economic news. It is naïve for Okigbo to imagine that the political environment can take precedence over natural environment. In fact, organisations such as African Network of Environmental Journalists (ANEJ) have actually emphasized the training of journalists for environmental reporting. ANEJ has actually formulated programmes to enhance the capacity of African journalists to deal with new and emerging environmental challenges (UNEP, 2006).

The media do not see anything intrinsically wrong with placing environmental news on a lower rung of news beats. It appears that to the media, an unstable political environment poses more danger to citizens than a physical environment under threat. Yet, nothing could be further from the truth; all developments are hinged on a sound natural environment. According to *Southern Africa Today*, the achievement of sustainable development goals is considered as inextricably linked to the way the environment is managed. This is because all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations have direct or indirect linkages with the environment since all forms of development depend on the availability of healthy ecosystem services.

SADC/IUCN/SARDC posit that communicating the environment is a challenge for the environmental journalist – the journalist should be adept at combining description and analysis in reports on environment. Environmental journalists are literally environmentalists. Apparently, they advocate health and safety of the planet and are concerned with issues like population growth, sustainability, energy conservation, global warming, climate change, acid rain, pollution of air and several other factors that contribute towards degradation of the quality of life. This responsibility obviously demands that an environmental reporter be adept at identifying good environmental news and relevant news sources. Furthermore, the journalist should create and raise awareness of the issues among readers since no single environmental terminology means exactly the same to everyone. In this case, repackaging of some environmental news might be necessary; for example, simplifying complex scientific information on the climate or air pollution so that a layperson may be able to comprehend and benefit therefrom. Strunk cited by McKane (2014) corroborates the foregoing points by urging environmental journalists to prefer the specific to the general, the definite to the vague, the concrete to the abstract. There should be clarity in environmental news so that readers do not fumble for meanings or contexts.

The concept ‘environment’ needs unpacking because it means different things to different people and contexts. According to Littig (2001) environment may have different meanings – depending on the kind of system relation it refers to. This study’s main focus is the natural environment, that is, flora, fauna, natural resources and ecosystems. While environmental professionals and academics may get their information through peer-reviewed publications,



specialist websites and environmental workshops, the public obtains knowledge of environmental management from television, radio, newspapers, magazines and sometimes through opinion leaders in their communities. The Internet is also becoming a useful tool in the search for knowledge about the environment due to its ability to offer access to large and varied amounts of information, although this can also be a liability, causing information overload. (SARDC, 2009). An inaugural ranking report of January 2013 on the Project for Improved Environmental Coverage (United States of America) asserts that on the whole, American local newspapers perform better than any other news platform when it comes to prioritizing environmental coverage with nearly three times more environmental headlines on the average compared to nationally focused news organisations. The sector had the lowest entertainment-to-environment ratio (leaving more room and resources for better environmental coverage).

The report mentioned above further posits that, to be certain, quantity of environmental coverage is not a proxy for quality of coverage, and it can be said that if one had to choose, quality is likely better than quantity. Case in point: running a plethora of headline stories that undermine the science of climate change is irresponsible in the face of facts, as Fox News has been criticised by the Union of Concerned Scientists. In contrast, if a news outlet has produced quality environmental stories, but neglects to prioritise these stories and place them in high visibility locations, then these stories are not reaching as wide an audience as they could or should. In other words, improved environmental coverage is dependent upon both quality of coverage, a greater quantity, and higher visibility of that coverage.

It is further asserted in the report that while there are clearly news organisations that are leaders when it comes to prioritizing environmental reporting, the findings of the report demonstrate that there is much room for innovation within the mainstream news media at large and a strong public desire to see this happen. The founder of Cable News Network (CNN), Ted Turner, cited by Moon Jana (2016: 5) once remarked;

*“We must go through a natural revolution if we are to survive on earth. We need to change people’s perceptions. If there is no environment, there’s no human race. We are in a state of global denial.”*

Turner posits that people need environmental understanding and concern to be a more integral part of their collective mind-set. He asserts that people are inextricably linked with the natural environment and their prosperity, health, security, and well-being are intimately tied to it. News coverage of the environment has a significant impact on public opinion, policy making and whether people, as a society, expand and deepen their stewardship ethic. Recent polling shows that almost eighty percent of Americans want improved environmental coverage in the news. Despite its value, however, coverage of the environment represented just 1.2 percent of news headlines in the United States during a seventeenth month period (January – May 2012) for the thirty nationally prominent news organisations ranked in the Inaugural Ranking Report, January 2013. Meanwhile, for some news organisations, entertainment and crime garner twenty times and sixty times more coverage, respectively, than the environment. The news media is a critical conduit that can engender better environmental understanding and a corresponding national stewardship ethic.

The report asserts that when the frequency of reporting on environmental issues is compared to reporting on celebrities or entertainment-related topics, it becomes clear that there is need for many mainstream news sources to reconsider what issues they prioritize. The report highlights that one recent study by Media Matters found that between January 1, 2011 and June 26, 2012 prominent newspapers and television news from major network and cable stations mentioned reality TV stars the Kardashians a combined 2,133 times while ocean acidification was only mentioned 45 times over the same period. The media, and in this case, newspapers are crucial in environmental management. The environment, its conservation or management is pivotal to national development. In the service of national development, the mass media are agents of social change. According to Sears (1985), development refers to a change process geared at improving or making better, the life and environment of man. Where the media come in development process is through what is called to development communication. The specific kind of social change they are expected to help accomplish is the transition to new customs and practices and, in some cases, to different social relationships. Behind such changes in behaviour must necessarily lie substantial changes in attitudes, beliefs, skills and social norms.

The media, by bringing what is distant near and making what is strange understandable, can help to bridge the transition between traditional and modern society. However, this current study's focus is not to see the transition, but to interrogate the print media's coverage of environmental issues. This is important because the traditional approach has and continues to play a critical role in environmental management. Generally, there has been consensus and appreciation by media houses, editors, journalists, policy makers, governments and civic society that environmental reporting is critical if at all the environment is going to be efficiently and effectively managed. Boykoff of the Center for Science and Technology Policy Research, and Environmental Studies Program, at the University of Colorado posits that contemporary environmental challenges permeate the very material and discursive fabric of people's lives, weaving through economics, politics, culture, and society. Through time, mass media coverage has proven to be a key contributor – among a number of factors – that has stitched spaces of environmental science, governance, and daily life together. Mass media have given voice to the environment itself by articulating environmental change in particular ways, via claims makers or authorised definers. He asserts that more formal spaces of science, policy, and politics operating on multiple scales often find meaning in people's everyday lives and livelihoods through mass media – albeit in messy, nonlinear and diffuse ways. The mass media have thereby influenced a range of processes, from formal environmental policy to informal notions of public understanding. He further postulates that media representations are convergences of competing knowledges, framing environmental issues for policy, politics, and the public and drawing attention to how to make sense of, as well as value, the changing world. Emanating out from these processes, public perceptions, attitudes, intentions, and behaviours, in turn, often link back through mass media into ongoing formulations of environmental governance.

Whilst Boykoff (2011) elaborates the crucial roles played by the media in informing and educating readers and policy makers about environmental issues, he did not reveal that there are factors which affect the content of news. Bennett (1996) suggests that the content of news is affected by three normative orders that individual journalists should contend with: *political norms*, *economic norms*, and *journalistic norms*. Political norms basically represent the idea that the proper role of the mass media is to provide the citizenry with political information that will lead to enhanced accountability on the part of elected officials. Bennett says that economic norms focus on the constraints on journalists' working within a capitalist society in

which reporting must be both efficient and profitable. Journalistic norms are concerned with objectivity, fairness, accuracy, and balance.

Anderson (1997) postulates that over recent decades the environment has become a key area of international debate. At various points in time different environmental issues such as pollution, global warming, invasion of wetlands, and poaching, have come to the fore of public and political attention. He argues that to some extent this reflects the activities of issue sponsors such as politicians, scientists and environmental pressure groups, as well as news media agendas. The world populations currently face a plethora of pressing problems concerning the global environment, yet this is an area that involves making complex choices about a number of interconnecting issues that are often characterised by a great deal of scientific uncertainty. In his view, the study of risk and the environment deserves to occupy a central place within media and cultural studies since the news media play a crucial role in framing this contested terrain. The speeding up of time and shrinking of space through modern communication systems has contributed to major transformations in the way people view nature.

According to Ogunjinmi, Onadeko and Ogunjinmi (2013) sustenance of nature has become one of the pressing issues facing humanity today with environmental and conservation education and awareness being regarded as one of the measures of halting conflict between human and nature. The Canadian Environmental Grantmakers Network (2006) asserts that solving today's challenging local and global environmental issues and moving society towards sustainability cannot rest only with "experts" but will require the support and active participation of an informed public in their various roles as consumers, voters, employers, and business and community leaders. Thus, mass media have become an indispensable partner in global biodiversity conservation and management through their various roles of not only increasing awareness on the problems and challenges towards environmental sustainability, but also in achieving the ultimate goals of changing human perception, attitudes and behaviour towards environmental resources.

Ogunjinmi, Onadeko and Ogunjinmi (2013) assert that providing accurate, high quality environmental report and engaging the public in a policy dialogue, independent media can also help citizens protect their own environmental interests. The mass media can also ensure widespread distribution of environmental information and thus catalyses action (UNEP, 2006). Because of the dynamic nature of environmental information, environmental report must be concerted, consistent and informed (UNEP, 2006). Environmental information is the crux of informational action (UNEP, 2006). The media are a central hub for amplifying environmental issues and can influence the course of policy (Science for Environmental Policy, 2009).

According to Novacek (2008), effective linkages between the scientific and conservation community and the public must be made through the main channel of dissemination, namely media in the form of news and educational programming. One of the strategies of IUCN-The World Conservation Union is the direct and tailored communication to specific targeted groups complemented by use of the mass media and reinforces the messages that are being sent to specific groups in order to create and maintain a general awareness of the issues in the wider society (IUCN, 2009).

Peter Makwanya (*NewsDay*, 17/08/15) identifies the need for training journalists in environmental reporting as critical if at all the media are to effectively report environmental news from an African perspective. Makwanya explains that Africa is one of the five priority areas identified by the United Nations Environmental Programme; and accordingly, environmental journalists need to be trained in environmental reporting. Since environmental issues, especially climate change is the topical issue of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; one would expect the majority of journalists to be conversant with matters concerning the rapid changing of the environment. However, that may not be enough if journalists cannot report environmental issues the African way. Understanding climate change information is one thing and reporting climate issues is quite a different aspect altogether. In view of that, African journalists are always found wanting on bolstering the African voice in their reporting and this is quite a monumental challenge. Another dimension is that, fortifying the African voice in their reporting is not always reporting environmental issues in their indigenous and local contexts or environments as it were. Instead, the thrust of the matter is that, can the audience identify

the Africanness, or to be precise, the Zimbabweanness and their related paradigms in the journalists' style of reporting.

Millar (2012) posits that one of the ways by which sustainable development and environmental sustainability can be enshrined in the minds of the public is through conservation education and awareness. The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. SDC further posits that the concept of sustainable development can be interpreted in many different ways, but at its core is an approach to development that looks to balance different, and often competing, needs against an awareness of the environmental, social and economic limitations society faces. Millar (ibid) asserts that media houses are a useful outlet for the promotion of sustainable development and campaign for social change, however, clear challenges remain. Environmental sustainability is defined as responsible interaction with the environment to avoid depletion or degradation of natural resources and allow for long-term environmental quality. The practice of environmental sustainability helps to ensure that the needs of today's population are met without jeopardising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (IUCN, 2002). A major challenge in developing countries is balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability (Center for International Media Assistance, 2009). Furthermore, while the focus of environmental education and public awareness programmes has been in the school system, the important roles the media play have often been overlooked (Ongkili, 2004).

The problem in part has been insufficiency of environmental information in printed and electronic media and the lack of depth of writers on the subject (Ongkili, 2004). According to Ongkili (2004), such contributions have been ad-hoc and the problem sounding rather than problem solving. He asserts that media reports on the environment always focus on crisis or problems. The quality of environmental journalism and broadcasting is usually fairly poor (GreenCom, 2001). The media's appetite for confrontation and bad news continue to make it difficult to reach out with positive messages in editorial media, creating a need for much more direct, that is, unmediated engagement with stakeholders (Kitchin, 2010). Kitchin asserts that, notwithstanding the above, mass media had been proven effective at sensitizing

people to the plights of individual species: seals, pandas, elephants, tigers and whales (Kitchin, 2010). Harnessing the power of the mass media is an important and critical challenge for any environmental organisation that wants to effectively change the habits and behaviour of a crowd, a nation or even the world (Castro and Wyss, 2004). They posit that effective interaction with the mass media can build constituencies; multiply the message and catalyse action. An important interaction, a conservation organisation and the media can have is the open and free exchange of information.

Ogunjinmi, Onadeko and Ogunjinmi (2013) postulate that paucity of information pertaining to Nigeria National Parks' policies and activities is a critical problem hindering the effective management of wildlife in Nigeria. They say that if the publics are not well informed on management conservation interventions, there would be less support from the public. This is because the success of protected areas is often determined by its stakeholders and is based on their understanding of and support for the protected areas (Castro et al., 2004). Hesselink and Goldstein (2003) reported that conservation organisations did not invest in communication sufficiently, and that they do not survey public perceptions in order to measure the impact of their communication. Communication and learning are for most managers, a forgotten priority (Hesselink, 2004). Used strategically and efficiently, communication supports the right to information and ensures that participation can be founded on the knowledge required to make decisions and take day-to-day actions (Hamu et al., 2004).

Onadeko (2004) contends that wildlife management cannot function without public support, or at least public sufferance, and that the development of favourable climate of public input must accompany or even precede the management of game. Lack of public information in relation to wildlife conservation efforts, the indiscriminate use of wildlife resources, and habitat degradation due to human activities are associated with human related issues of wildlife (Onadeko, 2004). Media roles in enhancing environmental awareness and consciousness among the public cannot be overemphasized. According to Compas et al. (2007), mass media are among the elements that can greatly contribute to the encouragement of environmental awareness in poor urban and rural based communities.

Boykoff (2011) tries to locate environmental reporting in cultural politics and the dynamics of communication processes. He posits that workings of mass media – processes and their effects – are usefully situated in a wider cultural politics of the environment, and changes therein. By cultural politics, he asserts that he means processes involving how meaning is constructed and negotiated across space and time. This involves not only the representations and messages that gain traction in discourses, but also those that are absent from them or silenced. Moreover, assessments of discourses are tethered to material realities and social practices. Harvey has commented, “struggles over representations are as fundamental to the activities of place construction as bricks and mortar”. Examining these features as manifestations of an ongoing process facilitates the consideration of questions regarding how power flows through the capillaries of our shared social, cultural, and political body, constructing knowledge, norms, conventions, and (un)truths. Such dynamic interactions form nexuses of power-knowledge that shape how people come to understand things as the truth, in turn, contribute to managing the conditions and tactics of life. However, rather than brash imposition of law or direct disciplinary techniques, these more subtle factors permeate and contribute to what becomes permissible and normal in everyday discourses, practices, and institutional processes. Effectively, these influences shape how people view environmental problems as well as potential solutions.

Boykoff (2011) further asserts that the discursive and material elements comprising a cultural politics of environmental change are inextricably shaped by ongoing environmental processes themselves. This has been described as the dialectic of nature and culture. Nature is not a backdrop upon which heterogeneous human actors contest and battle for epistemological and material successes. Rather, meaning is constructed, maintained, and contested through intertwined socio-political and biophysical processes. In other words, the changing environment and humans’ interaction in these spaces provides the material for the media to cover. He asserts that meaning is constructed and manifested through the ontological conditions of nature and the contingent social and political processes involved in interpretations of this nature. Approaching these spaces of cultural politics of the environment in this way helps to interrogate “how social and political framings are woven into both the formulation of scientific explanations of environmental problems, and the solutions proposed to reduce them”. These framings are inherent to cognition and effectively contextualise as well as fix interpretive categories to help explain and describe complex



environmental processes. Moreover, these serve to assemble and privilege certain interpretations and understandings over others.

Although cultural politics of the environment lurk in a multitude of spaces such as our neighbourhoods, county councils, workplaces, schools, and town centres, a prominent link between these spaces again is mass media (Boykoff, 2011). This community serves a vital role in communication processes between science, policy and the public. Representations of climate change via mass media shape many people's perceptions and considerations for action. Media communications thus unfold within a larger political context that then feeds back into ongoing media coverage and considerations. From regulatory frameworks such as bounding political opportunities and constraints, and institutional pressures, such as influencing political and journalistic norms; to individual decision making about what becomes news, these interactions are dynamic and contested spaces of meaning making and maintenance. Thus, it can be argued that mass media outlets and the many people and processes comprising them-effectively speak for the trees as they give voice to environmental problem formulations in various ways and also then frame the ways in which they are discussed and governed. These articulations may take on varied roles over time, from watchdog, to lapdog to guarddog (Boykoff, 2011). According to Sheila Coronel (2010), a watchdog press ensures that individuals and institutions who are supposed to serve the public remain transparent and are held accountable. A vigilant press is therefore key to good governance. In the context of environmental reporting, the print media would be expected to expose all violations on the environment by individuals, corporate, and the state. The lapdog press is passive and submissive; hence it shuns highlighting or exposing any violations or excesses perpetrated by the state or corporate. The Guard Dog Theory states that mass media and journalists primarily support dominant political institutions, major economic groups, and their values, but can and do criticize those organisations, especially when elite class members of those groups violate system values or when they criticize each other. Journalists provide support for the existing power structures, even while occasionally producing content critical of it and elites.

The issues of environmental management and reporting, that is, challenges, promotions, transformations and discourses are not confined to just a few countries. Whilst developed

nations like the United States are grappling with environmental challenges, developing countries like Zimbabwe also experience almost the same challenges. In several countries of the world, democratic, authoritarian and sundry; the media remain an important cog in national development of which environmental management is key.

Yanglei, Director of the English Service, CRI making a presentation at the 4<sup>th</sup> Asia-Europe Editors' Roundtable on October 23, 2008 in Beijing stated that environmental reporting in China has come a long way. It has been part of a massive ongoing transformation process in almost every single aspect of Chinese lives since the late 1970s, when the country opened its door to the outside world. It develops along with the media itself, whose rapid expansion in a fiercely competitive market over the years has offered more time slots and space for a greater variety of programs and insights that cater to the needs of the general public. Within that context, Yanglei highlighted a phase which commenced in 1978 when China's first legislation on the environment was put in place, and lasted through the 1980s. This period was a defining period for the country. After a decade of the chaotic "Cultural Revolution", which resulted in the destruction of the national economy, then leader Deng Xiaoping decided to lead the country out of its ideological struggles and take on a more pragmatic development approach in the drive to reform and open up. Motivated by the "to get rich is glorious" campaign, the Chinese people became so obsessed with their aspirations for better lives that they took advantage of any resource available to them, no matter what the potential cost.

Yanglei postulates that at this time, for most people, the concept of environmental protection, was more of a luxury than a reality pertaining to their own livelihoods. Although a few print and broadcast media had offered columns and feature programs on the environment, the overall coverage during this phase was quite primitive and limited. Environmental reporting, if there was any, mostly focused on disseminating general knowledge about waste disposal or anniversary activities concerning the environment. The once-booming rural enterprises, for example, often made headlines and were hailed for their innovation, flexibility and contributions to the local economy. But little media coverage was dedicated to the massive

pollution and destruction they posed to the environment, a fatal flaw that eventually led to their demise.

However, this was also a period in which professional environmental media took shape. “China Environment News”, China’s first newspaper on the environment, was published in 1983, and the first publishing house on environmental science was set up in 1980. CCTV, China’s largest TV network, launched its first environmental feature, *The Animal World*, in 1981. CRI did have a single nature program until the late 1980s. As the public woke up to environmental issues, the market-conscious media had to respond quickly. Instead of disseminating environmental knowledge and focusing simply on the government initiatives, environmental journalists had to start looking deep into what made the story in the first place. The demand for consistent, authoritative and accurate environmental information was so profound that it, to a large extent, prompted the government to release an annual report on the environment, a monthly report on the water quality of major rivers, a daily report on the air quality of major Chinese cities starting in 1996.

It is quite evident that China’s media have made some significant strides in the coverage of environmental news which has consequently heightened the level of awareness, knowledge and information about environmental management among the citizens. Apparently, the government has shown some keen interest in the conservation of the environment, and has supported the media.

Alvera (2013) emphasizes the fact that governments, organisations and citizens need to take the issue of environmental management seriously because of the negative impacts of some of the environmental changes, for example, climate change. Alvera (2013) posits that the projected impacts of climate change for Africa do indeed hold the potential to cause food and water supplies to become more unreliable, and to increase the frequency and severity of droughts, storms and flooding in low-lying coastal areas. Looking at these challenges, the involvement of the media in informing and educating people about climate change becomes important. By engaging in African voices, first and foremost, the journalists would be consolidating the fact that African voices need to bring people into the heart of sustainable

development rather than leaving them out of this vital eco-friendly discourse. Makwanya posits that with the way climate change issues are being reported in Zimbabwe and many other African countries, the African voices will continue to be elusive as well as being a perennial missing link. Most of the stories journalists write on environmental issues, especially the discourse of clean energy, has done a lot to cloud reporters' thinking and perceptions.

In Africa, some progress is being made with the assistance of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to train environmental journalists, through the establishment of the African Network of Environmental Journalists (ANEJ). This network now covers the entire African continent but its impact is limited. However, a good start should be consolidated and expanded. A possible way forward would be for some of the funds earmarked for environmental projects by development partners, bilateral donors, major non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and foundations for public awareness of the environment to be assigned to the training of journalists and government information officers. Ideally, however, the media should actually participate in the EIA process as a stakeholder. For example, since any major project in a country will benefit media houses and their staff, the media should themselves be interested in reporting on the project during both its discussion and implementation stages. Opinions among environmentalists differ but some consider that environmental issues should be reoriented or repackaged to make them more interesting, and even marketable, especially if they relate to environmentally sensitive and innovative projects.

At present, very few reporters or editors have much of a background in environmental issues, and by extension EIA, especially in Africa. This makes them reluctant to write or cover articles on the environment or EIA processes. Experts commenting on this issue routinely mention that the media should be involved in the EIA process but overlook the fact that the reporters and journalists covering environmental issues often lack any real experience with the issue. Being cognisant of the importance of environmental conservation to the country and its citizens, the government of Zimbabwe enacted a law, that is, Act [Chapter 20:27] of 2002 which gave birth to the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) charged with the

responsibility of monitoring and evaluating the state of the environment. EMA is a socially responsive environmental service delivery institution whose mission is to promote sustainable management of natural resources and the protection of the environment with stakeholder participation.

EMA's operations are informed by its core values upon which all interactions with stakeholders are based. These are integrity, timeous response, upholding stakeholder participation and unhu/ubuntu.

- The agency expects the highest standards of integrity from both its employees and the public in any transactions made.
- EMA expects to respond to issues raised by any of its stakeholders in the shortest possible time.
- EMA responds timeously to all environmental queries and complaints regardless of magnitude or scale. The value that EMA places on its stakeholders cannot be underestimated.
- Unhu/Ubuntu is the essence of humanity and EMA has vested interest in upholding this core value.
- EMA expects to uphold local traditional values in all its areas of operation. This includes working with local leadership and local people by enhancing local customs that enrich the environment. With these core values, the agency shall be able to achieve its vision of becoming a world class lead agency in environmental protection and sustainable management of natural resources.

Given that print and television media in Africa give less coverage to environmental stories, one idea worth exploring might be the creation of a television channel or channels on the lines of Animal Planet, the Discovery Channel or National Geographic, dedicated to African environmental issues. True, the international news channels such as CNN, Al Jazeera and BBC regularly show programmes on environmental issues but to cover all aspects of the environment across the African continent would require a variety of programmes and a great deal of innovation. Achieving that would be a challenge. Even in countries where environmental groups have been active since the mid-1980s, such as India, environmental coverage remains mixed. Vasanti (2009), for example, observes that coverage of the environment in the Indian media has increased in terms both of the scope and number of stories, with newspapers occasionally running these stories on the front pages or giving them

more prominence in inside pages. Furthermore, some Indian magazines, such as *Down to Earth*, have also been presenting thought-provoking articles and reviews on the environment.

In Africa the cheapest mass medium, radio, is available virtually everywhere and is especially valuable in that it commonly broadcasts in the local languages, but it has its own limitations. Stations looking for a cheap source of entertainment are likely to carry pop music programmes round the clock, while serious programming entails heavier costs in terms of time, effort and money – and risks alienating the audience. Today, the most effective media outlet, especially for urban and peri-urban dwellers in Africa, is television – provided electricity is available, of course. Television, however, like the other media as they are currently served up to the African public, operates predominantly as a commercial enterprise designed to entertain. It is therefore no surprise that, despite sporadic efforts across the continent, the quality and quantity of coverage of the environment still depend to a great degree on the personal interest and commitment of journalists, editors and owners.

All the above considerations notwithstanding, the media still have great power to influence people's opinions. Indisputable examples from Africa demonstrate that both local and international media can play a tangible role in preserving the environment. The Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) is a case in point. Various groups, particularly international NGOs, brought a measure of transparency to the project's EIA process principally by exposing its shortfalls. They used the press to pose questions to major investors such as the World Bank, bilateral donors, commercial and investment banks, and construction companies on issues relating to the tendering processes and to the compensation and resettlement of the people affected by the dam's construction (Winbourne, 2002). Print media such as the Press International Advisory Network published several articles in 2002 on the Canadian company that bribed the chief executive officer of LHWP and was subsequently prosecuted, found guilty and fined (Winbourne, 2002). Without the partnership between the NGOs, pressure groups and the media, the corruption surrounding LHWP would have gone unnoticed.

Another example is the media coverage of events in the Niger Delta in Nigeria that drew the attention of the world to the magnitude of the injustice and oppression in the area (Nwagbara, 2010). This, in turn, resulted in international condemnation of the military government of Sunni Abacha, especially regarding the unjust execution of the Nigerian eco-activist and writer, Ken Saro-Wiwa, and the eight other victims of Abacha's brutal reprisals (the "Ogoni eight"). In addition, after the resistance movement of the Niger Delta (MEND) accepted an amnesty, the people of the region placed all their trust in the media to sensitize the Government of Nigeria to the underdevelopment of the area and the environmental degradation caused by the extraction of oil. The media should play a role not only in illuminating the EIA process but also in raising awareness about the environment in general (Kakonge, 2006) cited in Luginaah and Yafu (eds) (2009). For instance, once an EIA process is completed, the ensuing management plan is rarely given full implementation. The media should help generate public debate on the progress made in implementing EIA recommendations. As things stand now, once a project's proponents have received approval from the authorities to go ahead, there is a risk that no one knows or cares what follows – unless something goes seriously wrong.

Clearly, the media alone cannot do much to ensure that the EIA process is effective in Africa or that the environmental issues relating to major projects are addressed. But a close partnership with NGOs, civil society and the affected communities could ensure that the proponents of a project are held to their commitment to implement the recommendations of its EIA. Accordingly, why should media outlets not dedicate a column to environmental issues, including approved EIA projects? The story does not need to appear on the front page of the paper (a common excuse for not carrying or covering an environmental issue), it can be somewhere inside the paper. Undoubtedly, media houses, development partners, foundations and international NGOs should enhance the capacities and capabilities of reporters and journalists in the area of environmental management, including EIA. Strengthened and unbiased media in Africa could play a double role: as overseers and as creators of awareness of the EIA process and related environmental issues.

## 2.2 Critics of Environmental Reporting in Zimbabwe

Mapira (2013) sought to look at the role of the media in providing environmental education (EE) in Zimbabwe as well as the challenges associated with the task. Mapira recognises the role of the media in environmental education as he states that the media are one of the main providers of environmental education in Zimbabwe. The media as an agent of socialisation, they play a key role in the dissemination of information, which can shape people's ideas, attitudes, knowledge and behaviour. He posits that the country's media seek to "*promote environmentally friendly habits through the production of well researched, balanced and probing environmental stories in indigenous languages as well as English*" (Zimbabwe National Environmental Education Policy and Strategies, 2003:31). But, Boykoff contends that journalists have failed to make climate economics and policy stories understandable and meaningful to readers. It could be the complexity of climate economics or policy stories, but the competence of journalists also comes under spotlight. It could also be attributed to the fact that the environmental stories being reported by journalists do not resonate with the people's understanding of the environment and the responsibilities they bear concerning the management of the environment.

Zimbabwe's EE policy came into operation in 2003 with the goals of making

*'sustainable development a national priority, to take a pro-active role in environmental issues and to respond to environmental challenges facing Zimbabwe at the personal, local, national, regional, and global levels through education and communication processes'* (Zimbabwe National EE Policy Document, 2003:3).

Mapira's study on the role of the media in environmental education targeted government-controlled newspapers (*The Herald, The Chronicle, The Sunday Mail, The Sunday News and The Masvingo Star*), privately owned ones (*Daily News, NewsDay, The Standard and The Mirror*) and the electronic media.

In an endeavour to provide EE in the country, Zimbabwe's media are guided by nine objectives, which are listed in the policy document:

- To integrate EE in teaching, learning, training and extension programs in the formal and informal sectors of education. The strategy involves the incorporation of EE in media studies. Three actions are involved, namely: the



provision of pre-service and in-service EE courses for media personnel, updating the media on key environmental issues/events thereby enabling them to report accurately and disseminate environmental news and emphasize the need for adequate research prior to reporting on environmental issues.

- To raise public awareness of environmental issues and promote holistic management of the environment in all sectors of the community. The strategy is to sensitise the public on environmental issues and SD goals in the country. The actions involved include: encouraging environmental reporting by media personnel, utilizing a variety of media channels to disseminate environmental information to the public, and involving the media in environmental activities and deliberations.
- To facilitate the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values requisite for environmentally sustainable behaviour. The strategy is to promote an environmental ethic by popularising environmentally friendly behaviour and actions. The main actions include: the use of various genres in mass media productions focusing on environmentally sustainable behaviour and produce inter-active media reports, which promote environmentally sustainable behaviour.
- To promote SD through the use of all channels of communication. The strategy is to document and report SD activities at community levels. Actions involved are: using a variety of mass media to document and report SD practices, making SD a key feature of media communication channels and highlighting global best practices on SD, which are applicable at the local level.
- To encourage sustainable livelihoods within communities not usually reached by formal channels of education and communication. The strategy involves encouraging participatory approach in the planning and implementation of environmentally sustainable projects by local communities. Actions on the other hand include: providing media and arts outreach programmes to outlying communities, documenting and reporting environmentally sustainable local community activities and initiatives, and drawing government attention to environmental challenges in marginalized communities.
- To identify and mobilize resources to initiate self-sustaining EE activities. The strategy is to support self-sustainable EE initiatives. Actions include: reporting self-sustaining initiatives by stakeholders and train communities to produce media materials on EE activities.
- To protect and promote the use of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). Strategies are: to develop community awareness of the value of IKS and to encourage the preservation of IKS. Actions include: providing media coverage of IK practices in English and indigenous languages and promoting and encouraging attitude change through documenting practical applications of IKS.
- To support private and public initiatives in EE research. The strategy is geared at making environmental research findings topical media issues while the action involves documenting and reporting public and private EE research initiatives and findings.
- To ensure monitoring and evaluation of EE programmes in all sectors. The strategy is to follow up progress of EE programme and activities. This is supported by two actions, namely: producing media reports (documentaries and features) covering the implementation of environmental programmes and

activities, and disseminating information on EE initiatives inside and outside the country.

Mapira highlighted some of the themes covered by the print media, namely: river/water pollution, dam construction, rains, storms and floods. In general, the articles educate the public on current environmental issues. Some of the challenges encountered by the media in covering environmental issues are resistance from communities, which do not take environmental issues seriously, and lack of skilled reporters (Mapira, 2013).

Experts in environmental management, for one reason or another may deliberately choose to mislead the public by giving wrong information so as to avoid alarm as is the case with the state of Lake Chivero water. The media are expected to provide accurate, balanced and objective news. However, in some instances, for example, the environmental destruction obtaining during Zimbabwe's "Third Chimurenga" could go unreported or could be censored by the authorities who own the public media such as *The Sunday Mail*. In some cases, the censorship is not apparent, it is subtle. Robert W. McChesney, says as George Orwell noted in his unpublished introduction to *Animal Farm*, censorship in free societies is infinitely sophisticated and thorough than in dictatorships, because "unpopular ideas can be silenced, and inconvenient facts kept dark, without any need for an official ban." (*Monthly Review*, 2001, Volume 52, Issue 10 (March))

As already elaborated in foregoing paragraphs, environmental reporting is critical for the management of the environment the world over. Approaches and focus may differ from country to country, medium to medium, media house to media house; but the overarching aspect or endeavour is to see that both flora and fauna are preserved for posterity. In view of this, almost every country seeks to have some form of coverage of environmental issues by the media albeit at different scales and/or angles.

According to Zahid Yousaf, Zil-e-Huma and Ehtisham Ali (2004), environmental journalism carries an assortment of probable meanings and repeatedly embraces several at once. It can

be well thought-out an advocate's beat, journalism with a purpose, or simply journalism about the environment. Essentials of the science and health reporter's beat also play a part in the environment journalism. At different times, the meanings of environmental journalism have remained different and environmental issues have changed from contemporary world, olden ones to more modern, pollution-related ones and the way the media have covered the environment issues has also a variety of changes. This observation is in consonance with Chenje's (1998) assertion that the scope of what constitutes environmental management has been broadened due to the transformations of the Zimbabwean society through colonialism. Things which could harm the environment have also increased in number. Hence, even the reporting of environmental issues keeps on being transformed and acquiring new dimensions and perspectives.

### **2.3 News Dynamics**

Environmental reporting like other genres of news reporting such as political reporting or economic reporting has its own challenges. These challenges impact on the selection and gathering of news sources, news and ultimately the quality of news. In some instances, journalists covering environmental issues are ignorant of what constitutes environmental management. Bell (1994) found a significant level of confusion between ozone depletion and the greenhouse effect in news media discourse. Some media practitioners clearly recognise this as an area of potential confusion. For example, an environment correspondent for BBC News maintained:

I think you get a lot of confusion, for instance, between the ozone layer and global warming, understandably because it is confusing. But I think there is an appreciable, a sizeable minority of people who know a lot, far more than I do. And we should never underestimate that.... We should be trying to make sure that what we are saying makes sense to them as well as to the far larger number who don't really know but probably but would like to know more and are rather worried without being quite sure why. (Interview, 5 February 1993)

However, some media practitioners' understandings appear to have more in common with the public's than with scientists':

Journalists are laypeople in their understanding of climate change and other scientific matters. They bring to their reporting task lay preconceptions of what is going on. It remains a moot point to what extent journalistic confusion reflects or creates public confusion. (Bell, 1994: 47)

Bell's study suggests that the public only really benefit from this type of information provision if they already know something about the issues themselves. Those people who do not have any knowledge of the topics tend to glean little information. In the case of Bell's sample most people knew a little about climate change issues, but on the whole their level of understanding was not high. Bell found evidence of a significant knowledge gap between the higher socio-economic sections of the population and the disadvantaged (Bell 1994). This leads to the conclusion that people only really benefit from media coverage if they already know something of the issue in question. This is also supported by other research focusing upon public awareness about racial issues (Van Dijk, 1988).

Furthermore, some researchers have found that some locals view environment as an external thing. This is in direct contrast to the way Africans, particularly Zimbabweans perceive and relate with the environment. There exists a socio-spiritual bond between human beings and the environment. This should not be misconstrued to mean that every Zimbabwean values effective management of the environment. Anderson asserts that the degree to which an issue resonates with widely held cultural values helps explain its prominence or lack of prominence in the public sphere. Processes of mass communication contain a strong element of ritual that encourages individuals to draw upon a shared reality in a form of sacred ceremony that affirms collective identity (Carey 1989, Sparks 1995) cited in Anderson, (1997). The researchers posit that much of the reporting of risk and the environment in the Western media is framed around beliefs about scientific and technological domination over nature. Some issues connect particularly well with deeply embedded cultural imagery (Hansen 1991, Paterson 1989, Wilkins 1989). For example, the fears associated with all things nuclear, or with food poisoning that are presented in terms of "deep threat". Similarly, news stories featuring wild animals, such as foxes, may invoke commonly held myths about their predatory activities. Many environmental news items resonate with the popular myth that contrasts a bleak urban landscape with an idyllic chocolate-box image of rural bliss. Such imagery plays upon nostalgia for a bygone age where people's ways of life are closer to nature. While images must in some senses be familiar, they must also contain an element of distinctiveness, and be dramatised in a symbolic way, if they are to make a major impact (Hannigan, 1995).

Burgess and Harrison (1993) found that in local (British) culture people tended to view the marshes as a “dump” populated mainly by rats and mice; they did not associate it with “nature”. Moreover, the media representations of the marshes reinforced the idea that the conservationists were from outside and did not really know the area. The local newspaper marginalised the conservationists by presenting them as outsiders and cranks. Burgess and Harrison (1993: 218) conclude: “it is practical life lived locally which determines the sense that people make of media texts”. According to Anderson (1997) there are significant information gaps between and across cultures. In some less developed countries, such as India, significant numbers of the population are illiterate. Individuals have different cultural repertoires that are available to them in making sense of environmental items. The audience can only be “active” with what they are given. News about risk and the environment is highly managed through direct censorship and the more subtle forms of self-censorship. The degree of prior knowledge and cultural capital that individuals possess is of great importance. Different audiences have varying competencies.

Environmental stories may be trivialised, if dealt with in the familiar format “soft” lightweight news, and fail to stimulate critical engagement with the issues. Also, there is a danger that people may become desensitized to environmental issues if they are subjected to overkill. Moreover, periodic media attention to social issues may falsely give the appearance that the issues are being resolved (Anderson, 1997). Whereas Anderson bemoans the reporting of environmental news in “soft” lightweight format, Chaguta (2010) says in the Zimbabwean case, among environmental stories, the popular format is the short hard news story. He postulates that environmental issues arise out of complex interplay between individual and institutional practice and the interface between these and their surroundings. As such, they require multidimensional analysis that cannot be accommodated in a typical 600-word hard news story. Seldom are environmental issues covered in the more appropriate feature or analysis story format.

Boykoff (2009) postulates that it is often those who are most at risk from environmental impacts, who also are those who typically have access to the least information. This shortcoming is detrimental to efforts to build resilient communities with improved capacity to adapt to changes in the climate, address climate impacts, and mitigate greenhouse gas (GHG)

emissions. Amid these larger trends, it is important to note that, to the extent that the policy actors and negotiators think of mass media attention to climate change as a proxy for public attention to climate change (and pressure for action). A diminished amount of coverage might be seen as detrimental to putting forward substantive agreements, such as the post-2012 regime negotiated in the run up to COP15 in Copenhagen, and more generally, to the future of significant international policy action on climate change.

Chaguta (2010) postulates that before news stories make it into the paper, the issue must first make it into the media agenda. The media agenda is the hierarchy of importance ascribed to different issues by a news organisation. The agenda at a news organisation is limited in capacity and there is fierce competition among stories for space. Dearing and Rogers (1996) think of issues as rising or falling on the agenda or competing with one another for attention. This process is a zero-sum game. What determines whether environmental issues make it onto the media agenda in the local press is a complex interplay between various factors. These include the influence of issue proponents, proprietary power, and the editorial policy with its influence on the value judgements of gatekeepers, exposure of the issue in other media, spectacular news events, extreme events that may result in disaster, and, sometimes, evidence of environmental processes.

According to Chaguta (2010) the gatekeepers at *The Standard* and *The Sunday Mail* maintain, paradoxically, endeavour to cover environmental issues without compromising their editorial independence. They must necessarily pander to the wishes of advertisers and the socio-political worldview of their publishers. Thus, environmental stories are rarely value free. Environment news reporting is not neutral and it is routinely packaged so as to conform to the ideological and philosophical moorings of the proprietors. Consequently, there appears, as already stated in this chapter, a privileged group of sources, comprising government officials and scientists who become the primary definers of environmental issues in Zimbabwe. Very little is seen of environmentalists, except, occasionally, in the private press, as issue proponents or definers of environment matters.

For reasons ranging from lack of competence of assigned reporters, gatekeepers' discretion, and the commercial imperative of the press, environmental reporting, as a category, competes less favourably with other news speciality areas for space on the media agenda (Chaguta, 2010). Chaguta posits that a general lack of competence for tackling the multidimensional nature of environmental reports dissuades reporters from pursuing the category and sustaining reportage, even when they sometimes stumble on a good environmental story. Further, reporters are not motivated to take up the environment category citing reluctance by editors to afford environmental news proportional space in the paper. Editors, in turn, cite various pressures influencing news selection processes as determinant factors leading to the observed low output of environmental news stories. Chief among them is commercial imperative. Editors argue that locally environment issues are largely regarded as a special interest category rendering them commercially non-viable for the popular press. Consequently, there is reluctance to avail resources to the coverage of environment issues. Chaguta (2010) says newspapers, typically, do not have a trained environment correspondent, let alone an environment desk and when environmental news does appear in the papers; it is fraught with distortions and constraints.

In the Zimbabwean context, Chaguta (2010) posits that within observed environmental coverage issues are circumscribed by frames of reference that also define their newsworthiness. Most environment stories fall within the related frames of risk, uncertainty, fear, outrage, and crisis. Environmental coverage is characterised by heightened fear of impending consequences of evolving environmental processes. Coverage is often risk-led and based on anxieties concerning threats to health posed by major incidents or disasters. Within a news story, these frames are operationalized by the use of scare words or phrases, the use of contextual references to past calamities, the choice of pictures, and the reference to disaster management related to expert sources, among other textual devices. There is an established hierarchy of themes that recur in environment reportage, the most prominent being those that lend themselves to the frames of uncertainty, risk, and crisis in governance of environmental resources.

He asserts that the type of story is also used as a framing device. Reporters avoid writing lengthy, analytical, articles based on complex research and, instead, resort to covering

environmental events and breaking news of disasters only in terms of statistics: loss of lives, lost revenue, or magnitude of rescue operations. In attempting to simplify for the audience, they also ensure that their stories get past the selection processes. This lends the environment beat to the hard news format, a frame that does not fully communicate the multidimensional nature of environmental issues and processes. He concludes that despite the clear urgency for increased reportage and discussion of environment and sustainability issues in the country's media, coverage remains low and subordinate to other societal concerns.

Suffice it to say that Zimbabwe's press has covered environmental issues. As stated in Chapter 1, both the national press and the international media have reported on environmental issues in several dimensions. The coverage of environmental issues has somehow dwelt on the "modern" ways of environmental management. It appears the modern way which is academically, and in some cases, conveniently named "scientific", stands a better chance of gaining the attention of the media as opposed to environmental stories which are informed by other bodies of knowledge.

The social structure produces norms, including attitudes that define aspects of social life which are of either interest or importance to citizens. Zimbabweans, even the urbanites have varied levels or angles of understanding and/or appreciation of the environment and its conservation. News supposedly concerns those recognisable items. Socialised to those societal attitudes and to professional norms, news workers cover, select, and disseminate stories about items identified as interesting or important. By news workers' fulfilment of this function, news reflects society: News presents to a society a mirror of its concerns and interests. For a society's definition of news to change, it follows logically, the structure of society and its institutions must first change. As Roshco explains, news may play a role in social change by reporting "interesting" deviant acts in the form of soft news, as in the prototypical example of man bites dog. Definitions of news remain dependent upon the social structure, not on the activities of news workers and news organisations.

However, the interpretive approach to news in terms of the window-frame metaphor is more active. It emphasizes the activities of news workers and news organisations, rather than the



social norms, as it does not presuppose that the social structure produces clearly delineated norms defining what is newsworthy. Instead, it argues, as news workers simultaneously invoke and apply norms, they define them. That is, notions of newsworthiness receive their definitions from moment to moment, as, for instance, newspaper editors negotiate which items are to be carried on page one. Similarly, this approach argues, news does not mirror society.

Melkote (1991) postulates that in development communication the experts and policymakers have neglected to listen, understand, and incorporate the innate wisdom and knowledge of the rural and urban poor concerning the environment in which they are very familiar (Alamgir, 1988). The diffusion of innovations research reinforced the stereotype constructed earlier by modernization theories that the rural people in developing nations had little useful knowledge or skills to contribute to real development and much of it was either irrelevant or trivial. In the eighties, however, development scholars began to discover the complexity, depth and sharpness of rural people's knowledge. Rural people's knowledge is often superior to that of outsiders. Examples can be found in mixed cropping, knowledge of the environment, abilities to observe and discriminate, and results of rural people's experiments. Rural people's knowledge and modern scientific knowledge are complementary in their strengths and weaknesses. Combined they may achieve what neither would alone. For such combinations, outsider professionals have to step down off their pedestals, and sit down, listen and learn. The Environmental Management Agency of Zimbabwe avers that sophisticated knowledge of the natural world is not confined to modern science. Societies from all parts of the world possess rich sets of experiences, understanding and explanations. Indigenous knowledge refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. For rural and indigenous peoples, local knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects. (EMA, Zimbabwe, 2018).

## **2.4 The Rationale of Reporting Environmental Stories**

According to Raven and Berg (2006), there are many indications that humanity is headed for environmental catastrophe. Today the human species is the most significant agent of

environmental change on planet Earth. People are overpowering the planet with their burgeoning population, transforming forests, prairies, and deserts to meet their needs and desires. They are consuming ever increasing amounts of Earth's abundant but finite resources – rich topsoil, clean water, and breathable air. Human beings are eradicating thousands upon thousands of unique species as they destroy or alter their habitats. Evidence continues to accumulate that human-induced climate change is putting the natural environment at risk. Suffice it to say that there is an urgent need to inform and educate humanity on the imminent danger, but at the same time proffering solutions or alternatives to existing environmental challenges. The media by design, have the potential, and in some cases, capacity to influence or agitate for change with regard to environmental challenges.

According to McQuail cited in Curran and Gurevitch (1996), underlying the proposal for a normative framework is a fundamental presumption, that the media do serve the 'public interest' or 'general welfare', whether by design or by chance. This means, in practice, that mass media are not the same as any other business or service industry, but carry out some essential tasks for the wider benefit of society, especially in cultural and political life. For this reason, the media can legitimately be held accountable for what they do or do not do and be liable to some claims that they do things which they might not choose to do. This presumption is, to some extent, invited by the media themselves which often, albeit selectively, claim to exercise a significant public role. Although the view has its opponents, it also has good credentials, and in modern times the presumption has often been acted on by way of commissions of enquiry, public intervention of various kinds (legal or economic). Whilst McQuail views the mass media as unifying and basically serving the interests of the public, Habermas (2006) thinks otherwise. Influenced by critical theory, Habermas sees the media as creating a society of private and fragmented individuals for whom it is difficult to form the public rational-critical opinion which could oppose established power. Habermas' position reflects the ambivalence felt by many towards the mass media – that here is a great power, but whether it can be harnessed for the public good, for example, awareness on environmental issues, is debatable.

For the media not to cover environmental stories in general would be a negation of its historically affirmed responsibility. It is so because the environment cannot be separated from

humanity and human survival, activities and endeavours. The environment is so fundamental to people's well-being and their futures that responsible media of any kind would want to give it a certain amount of attention. The Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF) cited by Dorroh (2015: 1) bemoans that in many developing countries, environmental reporting is 'kicked to the bottom' of the pile. Economic progress is the focus, and there is an environmental price to pay. Dorroh (2015) asserts that journalists and media development organisations say that lack of resources and specialization, as well as the perception that environmental news will not draw an audience, present the major challenges to better coverage of the topic. Apparently, environmental news is a broad beat, encompassing almost everything from wildlife trafficking to climate change. Dorroh (2015) further contends that mainstream news organisations tend to focus a lot on politics, crime, entertainment, and sports.

The call for Zimbabwe's media to give prominence to environmental reporting is hinged on the need to make environmental news contextual to the country (Zimbabwe) or the continent of Africa, and at times resonate with the vision and values of the indigenous people in sustainable environmental management. The importance of the environment, for example, land has been identified in literature as one of the resources which informs the humanity "unhu" of the people as they claim and assert their ownership of the same. Vambe and Khan (2009) depicted the importance of the land in their analysis of Zimbabwe's national anthem, "Simudzai Mureza weZimbabwe" in its conscious evocation of the natural flora and fauna. What is striking about their article is the importance they place on the land which is the important resource in the lives of Africans.

Wallack (1994) argues that environmental news usually has gaps and this makes it difficult for the reader to fully comprehend a story and make informed decisions. Though his study was on environmental causation of disease, his characterisation of how the media report, is quite pertinent to the coverage of other forms of environment, for example, natural environment. According to Wallack (1994) environmental reporting too often focuses on an 'information gap' whereby individuals are blamed for not acting appropriately due to a lack of complete knowledge. Apparently, when people do not have adequate information on environmental issues, they are incapacitated to make informed decisions on how to promote

environmental management or deal with some environmental challenges such as floods, poaching, or environmental degradation.

Effective environmental reporting by Africa's media is critical considering the environmental challenges the continent is grappling with. UNEP (2006) postulates that, people who have more capability to cope with extreme events or stresses are at lesser risk and are, therefore, more secure. Most African countries fall in the category of high risk and low coping capacity. Over the past 30 years, many African countries have faced increasing risk from floods, earthquakes, lava flows, fires, droughts, civil strife, and armed conflicts. These disasters have increased poverty, intensified serious health problems, and resulted in hunger. In addition, they have displaced populations across national borders and internally, contributing to further environmental degradation, and leading to more vulnerability and insecurity.

Furthermore, environmental reporting may not be a preserve of environmental reporters since environmental issues permeate all spheres of human survival and endeavours. Makwanya (2015) opines that since climate change is accelerating, it is not only the environmental journalists who are going to be held accountable when people fail to grasp climate change issues. It is essential for all journalists, editors and media proprietors to understand at least the basics of climate change. Journalists should use their local landscapes and physical features to tell the real environmental story, be it climate change, rainfall pattern changes, or wildlife poaching; in a true and uncontaminated African way. Makwanya, however, cautions that this does not mean that African journalists would completely disregard some sound aspects of globalisation. That is why research always recommends reporters to localise the global or rather to go global. Another weak point in environmental reporting is the dearth of research in environmental issues.

## **2.5 Reconnecting with Environmental Policies and Laws in Zimbabwe and Beyond**

Challenges of climate change and environmental degradation are apparent in various contexts. Some are created or exacerbated by ignorance of the effects of some actions on the environment, arrogance on the part of the polluters of the environment, self interest, or inertia

in terms of environmental policies and/or laws are concerned. Arroyo and Linguiti (2007) postulate that the United States – with 5 percent of the world's population is responsible for approximately 25 percent of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and its emissions continue to increase. Having declined to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, and as the world's largest economy and emitter of greenhouse gases, the United States is central to any long-term global strategy to address climate change. As the international community works to agree on actions appropriate after the Protocol's first commitment period ended in 2012, the domestic actions and international positions taken by United States are vitally important. It has been observed that all major sectors of the United States economy contribute to the country's GHG emissions. To accentuate United States' reluctance to reduce its GHG emissions in an endeavour to give impetus to the formulation of binding laws and international agreements dealing with environmental issues, at national level it has not done anything significant. It has not enacted binding limits on the emission of greenhouse gases, although several states are in the process of doing so. According to Arroyo and Linguiti (2007), when it comes to federal action, the only national target is a non-binding goal announced by President Bush in February 2002: an 18 percent reduction in emissions intensity by 2012. However, smaller states which ironically emit less GHG like Zimbabwe have enacted laws and formulated environmental policies aimed at safeguarding the environment from violation. Perhaps what may need interrogation is whether countries like Zimbabwe have effectively implemented their environmental policies and/or laws.

What is apparent is that the world over the issue of environmental management is no longer on the back burner. This is attested to by the serious formulation of environmental policies by individual countries, regional blocks like SADC and international organisations. In view of the environmental challenges bedevilling Zimbabwe, the government enacted the Environmental Management Act in 2002. The Environmental Management Act/ EMA Act, 2002 provides for the establishment of an appropriate legal and institutional framework for the management of the environment and related matters. It is a framework environmental legislation that establishes appropriate legal and institutional mechanisms for the management of the environment. It provides for improved legal and administrative co-ordination of the diverse sectoral initiatives in order to improve the national capacity for the management of the environment. This is in view of the fact that the environment constitutes

the foundation of national economic, social, cultural and spiritual advancement. SADC, African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN) have also paid due attention to environmental issues and this has culminated in the formulation of policies and enactment of laws designed to ensure effective and efficient management of the environment for the betterment of the planet.

### **2.5.1 The Environment Agency of Zimbabwe**

Following the promulgation of the EMA in 2002, section 9 of this Act gave the Minister of Environment and Tourism the power to establish an Environmental Management Agency (thereafter referred to as the Agency) whose duty was to formulate quality standards on air, water, soil noise, vibration, radiation and waste management. This Agency was formerly known as the Department of Natural Resources.

- To develop guidelines for national plans, environmental management plans (EMPs) and local environmental action plans (LEAPS);
- To regulate, monitor, review and approve environmental impact assessments;
- To regulate and monitor the management and utilization of ecologically fragile ecosystems;
- To develop and implement incentives for the protection of the environment; undertaking any works deemed necessary or desirable for the protection or management of the environment where it appears to be in the best interest of the public or where in the opinion of the Agency, the relevant authority has failed to do so;
- To serve written orders on any persons requiring them to undertake or adopt such measures as specified in the orders to protect the environment;
- To carry out periodic environmental audits of any projects including projects whose implementation started before the fixed date for the purpose of ensuring that their implementation complies with the requirements of the Act.

The Agency is controlled and managed by the Environmental Management Board which is composed of experts from the areas of Environmental Planning and Management, Environmental Economics, Ecology, Pollution, Waste Management, Soil science, Hazardous substances as well as water and sanitation.

#### **(Environmental Management Agency)**

### **2.5.2 SADC Environmental Responses**

Being cognizant of the importance of the environment and the attendant environmental challenges countries in the region grapple with, SADC took the initiative to ensure that countries in the region have policies and/or laws which promote environmental management. SADC has protocols which were formulated in an endeavour to manage the environment effectively and efficiently in every member country. According to the SADC Environmental Legislation Handbook 2012, the environmental protocols are:

#### **Summary of SADC environmental protocols**

There are two important SADC environmental protocols:

- The Protocol on Shared Watercourse Systems; and
- The Protocol on Wildlife Conservation and Law Enforcement.

The Protocol on Shared Watercourse Systems regards and incorporates the following:

- The Helsinki Rules on uses of the waters of international rivers and the work of the International Law Commission on the non-navigational uses of international watercourses;
- The relevant provisions of Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and the concepts of environmentally sound management, sustainable development and the equitable utilisation of shared watercourse systems in the SADC region;
- The existing and emerging socio-economic development programmes in the SADC region and their impact on the environment;
- Judicious and coordinated utilisation of the resources of the shared watercourse systems in the SADC region;
- The need for coordinated and environmentally sound development of the resources of shared watercourse systems in the SADC region in order to support sustainable socio-economic development and the common utilisation and management of the resources of these watercourse systems; and
- Other agreements in the SADC region on the common utilisation of certain watercourses.

All the African mainland countries have signed this Protocol, with the exception of the DRC.

The Protocol on Wildlife Conservation and Law Enforcement is an interstate regulation affirming that member states have the sovereign right to manage their wildlife resources and the corresponding responsibility for sustainable use and conservation of these resources. The aim is to establish a common framework for the conservation and sustainable use of wildlife resources in the SADC region and to assist with the effective enforcement of laws governing

those resources. All the original 14 SADC states have signed this Protocol.

### **2.5.3 AU Position on Environmental Matters**

It is also important to observe that the whole continent of Africa consider the environment as a critical cog in national socio-economic, cultural and political development. This is made apparent by the efforts the continent has made hitherto in terms of policy formulation with regard to environment inter alia. The Constitutive Act of the African Union which was adopted in Lome, Togo in 2000, provides in Article 13 that the Executive Council coordinates and takes decisions on policies in areas of common interest to the member states. This includes, foreign trade; energy; industry and mineral resources; food; agricultural and animal resources; livestock production and forestry; water resources and irrigation; and the environment and its protection.

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### **2.5.4 UN Reactions to Global Environmental Issues**

At global level, the UN came up with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) charged with the responsibility of ensuring the sound management of the environment in the world. UNEP, apart from having a mandate to ensure management of the environment, it also comes up with annual themes.

The United Nations Environment Programme is responsible for the environment theme in the UN system through the Environmental Management Group in which all UN organisations and the Bretton Woods institutions are represented. The UNEP mandate is to establish international standards for environmental policy and provide direction to international initiatives based on scientific knowledge.

More specifically, the UNEP's activities can be summarised as follows:

- monitoring and assessing global, regional and national trends related to the environment;
- developing national and international tools to address environmental problems;
- assisting national institutions that support environmental management;
- facilitating the transfer of science and technology related to the environment in the context of sustainable development;



- encouraging partnerships and new initiatives in the public, non-governmental and private sectors with the aim of bringing the most pressing environmental issues to the attention of authorities.

The UNEP strategy for the **2010-2013** period, which reflects the organisation's vision and mandate, focuses on six thematic priorities:

1. Climate change
2. Disasters and conflicts
3. Sustainable management of ecosystems
4. Environmental management
5. Harmful substances and hazardous waste
6. Resource efficiency - sustainable production and consumption.

Notwithstanding the noble thrust by individual countries like Zimbabwe, regional blocks such as SADC, continental bodies in the form of the AU, and international bodies, that is, the UN, in coming up with pieces of legislations and/or policies with regard to the management of the environment, what is imperative is the implementation. The destruction of the environment in countries like Zimbabwe where wetlands are violated willy nilly, one questions whether the EMA Act of 2002 is worth the paper it is written on.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The thrust of the chapter was to present and discuss related literature to environmental reporting. The coverage of environmental stories in different parts of the world and by various newspapers was discussed. The literature clearly showed that the media in different parts of the world have covered environmental issues, albeit at a smaller scale in comparison with other stories, for example, the life of celebrities, sport and scandal. Generally, journalists, in as far as environmental reporting is concerned seem to prefer the trodden path, that is environmental reporting from the 'modern' perspective. Environmental journalists seem to be sceptical about sources of information which are neither official (government officials) nor specialists (weather experts, agricultural experts).

The chapter endeavoured to highlight the critical role which the media play in informing and educating citizens, governments and other stakeholders on the importance of sustainably utilising the environment. Environmental information forms the crux of environmental action. The mass media are applauded for the prominent role they play in disseminating information; they can ensure widespread distribution of environmental information and thus catalyse environmental action. Achim Steiner, who is United Nations Under-Secretary-General, avers that the media continue to play a strategic role in raising environmental awareness, channelling environmental information and inspiring environmental action and, as such, is crucial to the work carried out by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). (UNEP, 2006).

Whilst acknowledging and appreciating the role played by the print media in environmental reporting, gaps and/or absences have been identified or noticed. Environmental reporting could borrow a leaf from African literature where writers like Chenjerai Hove vividly depict the relationship between the African person and the environment. In Hove (1988) the environment – rivers, mountains, forests, are habitat to animals and these serve both positive and negative purposes in human lives. Animal activity signals changes in seasons/the weather as exemplified, “the rains are near. Can you not see the birds flying in circles up there in the sky? When you see ants moving in a row like this, that is rain near us” (p. 18). This possible connection between the environment and human beings, when exploited in environmental reporting, it would resonate with the indigenous peoples’ use of their own knowledge and experiences in environmental management.

The following chapter, that is Chapter three, focused on research design. It spelt out the design which was used in the study, the research instruments, the sample and sampling techniques. It endeavoured to justify the choice of qualitative research for this study over quantitative or mixed research methods.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

### **3. Introduction**

This chapter focused on outlining the research methodology and designs of the study. The study employed the qualitative approach whereby data were collected and presented qualitatively. Newspaper stories were sampled, categorised and analysed. Data were also collected from the three weeklies. Qualitative research was adopted for this study because the researcher judged that a research approach oriented towards discovery, description and holistic comprehension and appreciation of texts would be an appropriate departure. A particular strength of quantitative research lies in its capacity to provide a broad analysis of phenomena, whilst qualitative research can focus on the operation of social processes in greater depth (Neuman, 2000). Quantitative research requires that the variables under consideration be measured. Qualitative methods can allow researchers a degree of flexibility in the conduct of a particular study; facilitate the examination of sensitive or difficult topics if a relationship of trust develops between the researcher and researched.

Neuman posits that qualitative data are in the form of text, written words, phrases, or symbols describing or representing people, actions, and events in social life. Except for the occasional content analysis study, qualitative researchers rarely use statistical analysis. This does not imply that qualitative data analysis is based on speculation or on vague impressions. It can be systematic and logically rigorous, although in a different way from quantitative or statistical analysis (Neuman, 2000). According to De Vos et al (2002), the qualitative research paradigm, in its broadest sense, refers to research that elicits participant accounts of meaning, experience or perceptions. Qualitative research is useful for exploring the full gamut of a little-understood phenomenon such as environmental reporting.

Paton (2002) asserts that qualitative inquiry is particularly oriented toward exploration, discovery, and inductive logic. Inductive analysis begins with specific observations and builds toward general patterns. Categories or dimensions of analysis emerge from open-ended observations as the inquirer comes to understand patterns that exist in the phenomenon being investigated. Geertz cited in Flick (2014) postulates that rapid social change and the resulting

diversification of life worlds increasingly confront social researchers with new social contexts and perspectives. Consequently, Geertz's and Flick's traditional deductive methodologies – deriving research questions and hypotheses from theoretical models and testing them against empirical evidence – are failing, due to the differentiation of objects. Instead of starting from theories and then testing them, research is increasingly forced to make use of inductive strategies: in the process, “*sensitizing concepts*” are required for approaching the social contexts to be studied. But here, theories are developed from empirical studies. Thus knowledge and practice are studied as local knowledge and practices. The current study, besides quantifying the news stories on the environment published in the newspapers, the study also delved deeper into aspects such as the value or importance given to environmental stories by media houses.

Furthermore, qualitative research enables a holistic perspective (Patton, 1990). Qualitative research assumes that a whole phenomenon is under study and that a complex system cannot be meaningfully reduced to several variables and linear causal relationships. Patton asserts that the advantage of qualitative portrayals of holistic settings and impacts is that greater attention can be given to nuance, setting, interdependencies, complexities, idiosyncrasies, and context (Patton, 1990).

Inductive analysis contrasts with the hypothetical-deductive approach of experimental designs that require the specification of main variables and the statement of specific research hypotheses before data collection begins. A specification of research hypothesis based on an explicit theoretical framework means that general constructs provide the framework for understanding specific observations or cases. The investigator must then decide in advance what variables are important and what relationships among those variables can be expected. The strategy of inductive designs is to allow the important analysis dimensions to emerge from patterns found in the cases under study without presupposing in advance what the important dimensions will be. The qualitative analyst seeks to understand the multiple interrelationships among dimensions that emerge from the data without making prior assumptions or specifying hypotheses about the linear or correlative relationships among narrowly defined, operationalized variables (Patton, 2002).

Sarantakos (1998) proposed some essential features of qualitative research and the following are pertinent to the current study:-

- idiographic – it describes reality as it is,
- interpretative – interested in *how*,
- historical – interested in real cases,
- open and flexible in all aspects,
- places priority on studying similarities, and
- employs an explicative data analysis.

### **3.1 Research Design**

According to Creswell (2012) research designs are the specific procedures involved in the research process: data collection, data analysis, and report writing. Best and Kahn postulate that all qualitative research uses the design strategies of emergent design flexibility and purposeful sampling and most use naturalistic inquiry. These design strategies indicate that the research is a work in progress that may change as the data are collected and the samples (whether documents or persons) are selected for their usefulness rather than randomness. Design flexibility is a staple of qualitative research that distinguishes it starkly from quantitative research. In a quantitative design, the entire research study is spelt out in great detail before any data are collected and no changes are made during the course of the study. The qualitative researcher initially has some ideas about the design but is open to change as the data are collected and analysed. This permits the researcher to make design corrections to adjust to new information and discoveries (Best and Kahn, 2006).

The researcher chose the exploratory and descriptive research design due to the nature of the study. Exploratory research affords one insights into and a profound understanding of an issue or phenomenon. It is a type of research which is conducted because a problem has not been clearly defined. It helps to determine the best research design, data collection method and selection of subjects. While descriptive research, also known as statistical research, describes data and characteristics about the population or phenomenon being studied. Descriptive research answers the questions *who*, *what*, *where*, *when* and *how*. Hence, on the

basis of the above, the two research designs are appropriate for this study as it was important to quantify the environmental news stories, evaluate them, and critique the news genres employed in the coverage of environmental issues. The study analysed three weeklies, to determine news angles adopted in news coverage and discovered newspapers which valued environmental reporting.

Qualitative content analysis served to complement exploratory and descriptive research. It is one of numerous research methods used to analyse text data. Other methods include ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and historical research. Research using qualitative research content analysis focuses on the characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text. Keyton postulates that content analysis integrates both data collection method and analytical technique to measure the occurrence of some identifiable element in a complete text or set of messages. This is apparent in environmental news messages where certain words or passages may denote and in some instances connote actions, behaviour and attitudes towards environmental issues. A reader may deduce from a news story whether the reporter or the community have an understanding and/or appreciation of indigenous knowledge systems with regard to environmental management. Therefore, news stories are not value free; instead they are laden with ideologies and hegemony. As a technique, content analysis helps researchers make inferences by identifying specific characteristics of messages (Keyton, 2001). Flick (2014) posits that due to the schematic elaboration of the proceedings, content analysis seems more clear, less ambiguous, and easier to handle than other methods of data analysis.

Content analysis should be objective and systematic. The biases of the researcher are not expected to colour the complexion of the research findings. Content analysis in this study provided a description of the characteristics of environmental news itself – the manifest content. Or content analysis can be employed to study the latent content – interpretations about the content that imply something about the nature of the communicators or effects on communicators. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011: 458) postulate that content analysis involves reading and judgement. The researcher should be immersed in data so as to pick up

all clues. Content analysis also involves, that is reflecting on data and developing interpretations and meanings.

The study also employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) so as to complement the qualitative content analysis. According to van Dijk (1998) CDA is a field that is concerned with studying and analysing written and spoken texts to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias. Fairclough (1993) defines CDA as discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between discursive practices, events and texts; and wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes. CDA seeks to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society which are used in discussing or presenting issues. According to Fowler et al. (1979: 188) asserts that it another central assumption of CDA is that speakers make choices regarding vocabulary and grammar, and that these choices are consciously or unconsciously “principled and systematic.” Thus choices are ideologically based. Fowler posits that the “relation between form and content is not arbitrary or conventional, but form signifies content”. In sum, language is a social act and it is ideologically driven.

CDA is critical in this study on environmental reporting because it enables readers and other players to understand news discourse. According to van Dijk, themes and topics are realised in the headlines and lead paragraphs. Van Dijk (1988) avers that the headlines “define the overall coherence or semantic unity of discourse, and also what information readers memorise best from a news report”. He claims that the headline and the lead paragraph

express the most important information of the cognitive model of journalists, that is, how they see and define the news event. Unless readers have different knowledge and beliefs, they will generally adopt these subjective media definitions of what is important information about an event (van Dijk, 1988: 24).

Issues of inclusion and exclusion in news stories have the potential of influencing the way consumers decode media texts, and in this case, environmental news. Selection by journalists and the media is also involved in choosing the sources of information, for example, who gets interviewed or who gets to be quoted or heard in news. Fairclough (1995b) postulates that,

one striking feature of news production is the overwhelming reliance of journalists on a tightly limited set of officials and otherwise legitimized sources which are systematically drawn upon, through a network of contacts and procedures, and sources of 'facts' and to substantiate other 'facts'. (p. 49).

Fairclough (1995b, p. 49) asserts that in contrast to officials, ordinary people, whenever they are used as sources, are mostly allowed to speak their personal experience rather than expressing opinions on an issue, for example, possible causes of wetlands invasion. This heavy reliance on officials as sources of information is tied to the media's dependence on the status quo to keep their ownership, and continue their profitability. Therefore, CDA helped in this study to interrogate the choice of words employed by journalists in their environmental stories, the sources of news which were selected, and the voices, opinions or sentiments which were included or excluded in the environmental management discourse.

Since data from the three newspapers were qualitatively analysed and interpreted, the researcher did not employ questionnaires or interviews to gather information from editors or journalists.

### **3.2 Population**

According to Keyton (2001) a population consists of all units, or the universe – people or things – possessing the attributes or characteristics in which the researcher is interested (Keyton, 2001). For instance, the population for this study is 156 issues of the three weeklies, that is, 52 issues per newspaper title. The period which was surveyed is 2014, from January to December. Before a sample can be selected, the population must be identified. Researchers begin by identifying the characteristics they want participants or elements to have or contain. The three newspapers, that is, *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail* have one characteristic, they are all weeklies. Then care should be taken to make sure that the sample reflects the population in which the researcher is interested. In other words, the sample must contain the same common characteristic that made the researcher interested in the population. Keyton (2001) asserts that the population of interest is inherently linked to the hypothesis or research questions the researcher wants to answer. In view of the foregoing, identifying the population should be the researcher's primary concern even though the research is actually done on the participants or elements that constitute the sample.



### 3.3 Sample

A sample is a subset, or portion, of a population. Generally, researchers study the sample to make generalisations back to the population. Generally, it is impossible, impractical, or both to ask everyone to participate in a research project or even to locate everyone or everything in the population. When that is possible, the term census is used to refer to the complete count of the population (Keyton, 2001). According to Polit and Hungler (1999) sampling is the process of selecting a portion of the population to represent the entire population. Brink and Wood (1998) posit that exploratory design calls for small samples that are selected through a deliberative process to represent the desired population. Unlike quantitative research, there was no need to randomly select newspapers, because manipulation, control and generalisation of findings were not the intentions of the research.

The study employed purposive sampling. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) postulate that in purposive sampling, often (but by no means exclusively) a feature of qualitative research, researchers hand-pick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality or possession of particular characteristics being sought. In this way, they build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) purposive sampling, also known as selective or judgment, selective or subjective is a sampling technique in which researcher relies on his/her own judgment when choosing members of population to participate in the study. Purposive sampling is undertaken (Teddlie and Yu, 2007) for several kinds of research including: to achieve representativeness, to enable comparisons to be made, to focus on specific, unique issues or cases, to generate theory through the gradual accumulation of data from different sources. Purposive sampling, Teddlie and Yu (2007) aver, involves a trade-off: on the one hand it provides greater depth to the study than does probability sampling; on the other hand it provides lesser breadth to the study than does probability sampling. This sampling technique was opted for due to its strengths. Purposive sampling is less costly and less time consuming. It ensures proper representation of the universe when the investigation has full knowledge of the composition of the universe and is free from bias. The technique also prevents unnecessary and irrelevant items entering into the sample per chance. Saunders et al. (2012) posits that purposive sampling ensures intensive study of the selected items. Purpose sampling also gives better results if the investigator is unbiased and has the capacity of keen observation and sound

judgment. In this study, purposive sampling was selected to study and evaluate the content of Zimbabwe's three weekly newspapers with regard to environmental news reporting. As its name suggests, a purposive sample was chosen for a specific purpose, that is, the deliberate and conscious selection of newspapers which published environmental news.

However, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) have posited that whilst purposive sampling may satisfy the researcher's needs to take this type of sample, it does not pretend to represent the wider population; it is deliberately and unashamedly selective and biased. For example, this study did not analyze every issue of the three weeklies, that is, *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail*; it solely selected issues which published environmental stories. Purposive sampling saves time, money and effort. It is flexible and meets multiple needs and interests. It enables researchers to select a sample based on the purpose of the study and knowledge of a population. They choose subjects because of certain characteristics.

At the beginning of the study, the researcher selected all issues of the weeklies for the year 2014. Thereafter, he looked at the target population (newspapers with environmental news) and later extracted a sample. The researcher focused on a small sample. Tjale and De Villiers (2004) contend that large samples in qualitative research may result in the generation of an amount of data that is difficult, if not impossible, to manage and to analyse in meaningful ways. Qualitative research therefore calls for small samples. Streubert and Carpenter (1999) concur with the view that qualitative methods require a small, purposive sample for completeness. They assert that the sample size is not predetermined. The required sample size in qualitative research depends on when saturation of data is reached, that is, until no new data emerge, but previously collected data are repeatedly reintroduced into the study. Qualitative research focuses on the quality of information derived from the documents or participants, rather than on the size of the sample (Burns and Grove 2003). The researcher continued to access environmental news with the intention to get more information until it reached saturation level and then analysed and endeavoured to give a sound interpretation of the stories.

### **3.4 Data collection**

Data were collected by going through the weeklies and identified environmental news stories which were published in the three weeklies. The researcher categorised stories on environment with the aim of quantifying them, for instance, the number of environmental stories which appeared on the front page of all weeklies, and later checked on the number of the same genre appearing on the front page of each weekly. The researcher analysed the genres employed, stories published in the hard news and soft news genres. Furthermore, the accompaniment of environmental news stories with pictures was looked at. Jennifer Ehidiam en posits that photographs enhance the credibility of stories. Berger concurs as he highlights the power of images in the September 2011 bombing of the Twin Towers.

The images of the airplanes crashing into the World Trade Center and then of people leaping to their deaths rather than face being burned alive and of the gigantic buildings collapsing were horrendous and shocking. In many respects, these images changed the consciousness of people all over the world about the danger of global terrorism and about the nature of the world in which we live (Berger, A.A., and 2008:23).

### **3.5 Data analysis**

Data analysis commenced as soon as all environmental stories from the three weeklies had been identified and selected. The researcher immersed himself in the content of newspapers. Analysis of data in qualitative research is a hands-on process which requires the researcher to commit fully to comprehending what the data say. The data in this study comprise environmental news stories collected from the four weeklies which were under study. The researcher took stories from each of the newspapers and analysed them separately in a way which was meant to address the study's research questions. Several factors such as content, slant, placement of stories (front page, centrespread, etc.), genres, editorials, photographs and readers' letters were analysed. The researcher analysed the placement of news stories, genres (hard, soft, artistic, literary) and sundry. The news stories were categorised to facilitate efficiency in data analysis. Strauss and Corbin (1990) define category as a classification of concepts, for example environmental pollution or conservation. According to Strauss and Corbin this classification is discovered when concepts are compared one against another and

appear to pertain to a similar phenomenon. Thus the concepts are grouped together under a higher order, more abstract concept called a category.

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

Neuman postulates that, more than any other issue, the discussion of research ethics has focussed on possible negative effects on research participants. Being ethical requires that one balances the value of advancing knowledge against the value of non-interference in the lives of other people. If research participants had an absolute right of non-interference, most empirical research would be impossible. If researchers had an absolute right of inquiry, it could nullify participants' basic human rights. The moral question is when, if ever, researchers are justified in taking risks with the people being studied, possibility of causing embarrassment, loss of privacy, or some kind of harm (Neuman, 2013). However, in this study, the researcher was focusing exclusively on document analysis, that is, analysing environmental news stories which were published in the three weeklies in 2014 (January to December). He did not administer any questionnaire nor conduct interviews for this study. Questionnaires and interviews are more relevant for quantitative research, this one is purely qualitative hence it was not imperative to use either questionnaires or interviews.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter sought to discuss research design, methodology, population, data collection and ethical consideration. The content of the three weeklies, that is, *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail* was presented, analysed and interpreted in the following chapters. The study employed qualitative research method in trying to establish how environmental news was reported by Zimbabwe's print media. Content analysis is the research method which this study employed. Content analysis is a research technique used to make replicable and valid inferences by interpreting and coding textual material. By systematically evaluating texts, for example, documents, oral communication, and graphics, qualitative data can be converted into quantitative data. Furthermore, critical discourse analysis (CDA) was also used in this study. In the field of applied linguistics, CDA has been used enormously in various genres analysing the critical phenomena which leads to the emergence of ideology, power relation and domination within a domain. Media is an explicit

domain and public is exposed to various ideologies and blind-fold their mind as a certain ideology is enforced on them in their daily life (Ramanathan and Hoon, 2015).

Chapter 4 analysed environmental news stories which were published in the *Daily News on Sunday* of 2014.

## CHAPTER 4: The Reportage of Environmental News in the *Daily News on Sunday*

### 4. Introduction

This chapter's thrust was to present and analyse environmental stories which were published in the *Daily News on Sunday* between January and December 2014. Focus was on the framing of environmental stories appearing in the newspaper. The chapter analysed and interpreted the environmental discourse and evaluated the themes that are apparent in the news stories. Themes such as deforestation, flood victims, poaching, climate change, water pollution and elephant extermination were analysed and interpreted. News stories were purposively selected based on their relevance, that is, environmental news which predominantly focuses on the natural environment. The use of hard and soft news genres in reporting and their impact or lack of it was evaluated. 'Hard' news is characterised by Tuchman and others (Limor and Mann, 1997; Patterson, 2000) as having a high level of newsworthiness, that is, news value. Hard news usually focuses on politics, economics and social matters; demanding immediate publication. On the other hand, 'soft' news does not necessitate timely publication and has a low level of substantive informational value, if at all, that is, gossip, human interest stories, offbeat events. It was also deemed critical in this chapter to assess whether the reporting of environmental issues by the newspaper promotes a media agenda on environment, which may subsequently evolve into a government agenda.

Anchored in the above theoretical perspectives, this chapter endeavoured to create a link between the news coverage of environmental issues and the relevant media theories; this will assist in conceptualising the gamut of environmental reporting. Agenda setting theory, development media theory and framing will help unpack but at the same time synthesise environmental news as they appear in the newspaper. McCombs and Shaw view agenda-setting as the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media. Development media theory which essentially applies in countries at lower levels of economic development and with limited resources, takes various forms but essentially proposes that media freedom, while desirable, should be subordinated, of necessity, to the requirements of economic, social and political development ([https://www.le.ac.uk/oeresources/media/ms7501/mod2unit11/page\\_07.htm](https://www.le.ac.uk/oeresources/media/ms7501/mod2unit11/page_07.htm)). Van Gorp (2007) concurs with Tuchman (1978) that framing is that process of turning nonrecognizable

happenings or amorphous talk into a discernible event. The chapter sought to explore and interrogate the themes, narratives and perspectives which permeate, are prevalent, or silent in environmental news stories. This was achieved through segmenting news frames into; words and symbols, preferred meanings, omission analysis and limiting the debate.

Agenda-setting is relevant to this study since it has been observed by McCombs et al., (1997) that the more the news media report about particular issues, the more prominence these issues will gain among the general public. This current study on environmental reporting would be enhanced by interrogating whether the Zimbabwean print media have influenced attitudes, perceptions and perspectives on environmental issues. Media development theory becomes relevant to this study when environmental news content is interrogated, that is, whether the media are taking into cognisance social, economic and political factors which may have a bearing on environmental issues. The framing of a story is essential in news reporting, it can either take an economic or political perspective inter alia. Therefore, the study will endeavour to confirm whether the environmental stories which were published in the *Daily News on Sunday* were framed in a way that would influence the environmental discourse.

The agenda setting role of the media seems to borrow certain elements from the ‘effects paradigm’. Some kinds of communication, on some kinds of issues, brought to the attention of some kinds of people, under some kinds of conditions, have some kinds of effects. The news media have a greater agenda-setting effect when they cover unobtrusive issues, that is, issues for which individuals have next to no other source of information and little direct contact, than for obtrusive issues, for which there are other sources of information, so that people do not have to rely solely on news media for information. The environment and its pollution are such an unobtrusive issue. Adler (1993) confirmed this view in her study of the news coverage of pollution and the salience of environmental issues on the public agenda. She found a positive correlation between news coverage and issue saliency. She further argued that citizens have no means to check a particular company’s environmental impact, but may be considerably affected by it, which is why the news media play a crucial role in shaping people’s environmental concerns and attitudes (Adler, 1993). More recently, climate change has been identified as an issue where the general public has to rely on the news media as intermediaries between citizens, scientists and politicians (Olausson, 2011).

The section below analysed the reportage on environmental stories that emphasize the critical role of the print media in highlighting and interrogating reportage of environmental issues. Since it is not practically feasible to analyse every environmental story published in the *Daily News on Sunday* in 2014; a representative sample was purposively selected. The first story to be analysed is “Lingering hardships after Tokwe-Mukorsi” floods because of the impact of the floods on the Chingwizi residents. In the story below on the plight of the Tokwe-Mukorsi victims “Lingering hardships after Tokwe-Mukorsi floods” was published on February 16, 2014 (p.7). The story below shows that even young children are not oblivious of the challenges being faced since their forcible eviction from their homesteads in the Tokwe-Mukorsi flood basin.

#### **4.1 Lingering hardships after Tokwe-Mukorsi floods**

##### **4.1 Words and symbols**

Reporters in their news reporting deliberately and consciously select words to employ with the intent to invoke certain feelings in readers or audience. Gamble and Gamble assert that the process of communication involves using words to help create meanings and expectations. However, as important as words are in representing and describing objects and ideas, meaning is not stamped on them. Meanings are in people, not in words (Gamble and Gamble, 2010). The choice of words and the way the reporter chooses to fashion the discourse creates a frame within which the text can be decoded by readers. Even though Gamble and Gamble (2010) imply the sovereignty of the consumer of media texts by postulating that meanings are in people, the media can set agendas by the way they frame news stories through words. According to Fairclough, analysis of ‘framing’ draws attention to how surrounding features of the reporting discourse is interpreted. Framing can be blatantly manipulative (Fairclough, 1995).

The words used in reporting the crisis at Chingwizi denote dejection and betrayal. The reporter uses words like bare footed, dry-lipped, evacuation, frantically, mobilising resources, Treasury, villagers, assisting, marooned, challenges, crisis, dumping villagers, violated the rights, human rights, food, shelter, poor planning, starve, relocate, compensation and NGOs. “We no longer go to school at all, our uniforms and books were swept away in the



floods,” said Netsai Muhamba, a Grade Five pupil, who was granted permission to speak to the *Daily News on Sunday* by her mother, Rebecca. “We have been here in the open for the past four days. We see our schoolmates passing by, but we cannot go anymore because anytime we can be moved to another place. We do not know if there are any schools at the places where our parents will be resettled.” The betrayal frame pervades this story. From the information given by the pupil, it would give the impression that the government had almost forgotten about the plight of the Tokwe-Mukorsi victims. But the information given by a government official says something different. “Local Government minister, Ignatius Chombo who visited the stranded villagers earlier last week said government was mobilising resources and food while he begged NGOs to assist.”

In the story, the then minister Chombo is quoted saying, “The government through relevant ministries is mobilising resources to adequately resettle these people properly. We are going to see that no one will starve so the Treasury will be releasing funds to cater for everything including funds”. Prima facie, the government appears to be concerned about the crisis and is finding solutions. But the minister’s assertion is debunked by the complaints of the villagers on lip-service being given by the authorities. “The ministers are coming here on a daily basis, one after the other but they just leave their empty promises,” said Memory Maguraushe. Whereas the minister assured the reporter and the villagers that the government would ensure that no one starves, the situation on the ground has a different story. “Our families are starving and children are not going to school but they continue to pile lies on us, it’s really bad”, complained a villager. There is an apparent contradiction between what authorities are saying and what victims are experiencing. But in the interest of objectivity and balance, the reporter should have asked the minister to corroborate his statements vis-à-vis the villagers’ concerns. Mencher posits that unfair and unbalanced journalism might be described as a failure in objectivity (Mencher, 2008). Getting both sides on an issue would enhance objectivity and lend credence to a story or pronouncements made by the victims and the government officials. To a certain extent, it reduces biases or idiosyncrasies on the part of the journalist.

Another story which reveals the plight of people at Chingwizi camp is “Flood victims struggle to adjust to camp conditions” which appeared in the issue of March 23, 2014 (p.6)

has words which the reporter employs to depict the sorry state of the people at Chingwizi transit camp. The reporter uses words such as “flood victims”, “donors and well-wishers”, “sweltering heat”, “long winding queues”, “precious liquid”, “dire need”, “stress related illnesses”, “food situation”, “heavy rains”, “transit camp” and “starvation”. These words denote desperation and vulnerability. Rusero (2014) says vulnerability is a characteristic of a person or group in terms of their incapacity to cope, anticipate or recover from the impact of a hazard. In the story, the reporter writes about the calamity which befell people of Masvingo province whose homes were near Tokwe-Mukorsi Dam. Their situation is described as desperate since they struggle to get food and even water. They have to rely on the benevolence of donors and well-wishers for mealie-meal, salt, relish, clothing and water. Their situation is further compounded by the fact that even the livestock they used to own was wiped away by the floods. What is explicit in the story is that these flood victims have become virtual destitute and they do not foresee themselves coming out of the woods anytime soon. In the third paragraph, the reporter shows that the disaster has impacted negatively on development because “hundreds of young men” are also stuck at the transit camp when they should be engaged on productive work. The story reveals that the flood victims have very little to do to fend for their families since they have to work up every morning and be part of the long winding queues for their daily supplies of food, water and other rations.

“It’s not that we are ungrateful for the water we are receiving, but some of us have more than six children and the two buckets we are receiving per day are not enough to cater for all our needs,” a villager complained. In the story, villagers bemoan the inadequacy of the water they are receiving, for example, two buckets per day when some of them have large families. They assert that even though boreholes were sunk within the camp, it has not solved the issue of water since the water is salty and not suitable for human consumption. Such statements from the flood victims tend to show that there was no needs assessment which was done; hence some of the assistance that is coming might be merely a knee-jerk reaction. Yet there is a government which is supposed to be aware that there are people it temporarily settled at Chingwizi. The story points to the people’s sense of desperation as they see no end to their situation. “And the queues never seem to end, as barely a few metres away; other women are queuing to receive porridge rations, while others are queuing to receive second hand clothing”. Attention is being drawn to the fact that these flood victims are now entirely reliant on handouts from donors. It points to a dysfunctional system where even basics are no longer

accessible yet there is a government in place. An Econet booster is akin to a scarecrow in the camp because the victims are struggling to survive and one wonders whether they would get money to communicate using their cell phones.

The reporter also interviewed Kudakwashe Bhasikiti, the then minister of State for Masvingo Province in relation to the plight of the Tokwe-Mukorsi flood victims. “Kudakwashe Bhasikiti, the then minister of State for Masvingo Province, said some villagers are being diagnosed with stress-related illnesses at the clinic. He said villagers were used to working in their fields but now there is nothing much to do”. The impression one gets is that even the minister is hopeless and powerless, as well as clueless on strategies to employ as a way of ameliorating the hardships being experienced by the people. In the same story, the minister is quoted, “Bhasikiti said the food situation was dire at the camp and the villagers risk starvation. He said the camp has food that would reach only the first week of April”. The minister is quoted twice in the same story simply bemoaning the desperate situation wherein the villagers find themselves in, but fails to proffer a solution. The weakness and ineffectiveness of government officials is evident and one is tempted to question the rationale of having a minister of State if he/she can respond to and solve the problems of the people he represents in the government. It appears as if he is also looking up to the donors and well-wishers to assist the flood victims whilst the government blatantly reneges on its responsibility to cater for the welfare of its citizens.

The statements of the people in the story show that they feel neglected and betrayed by the government as demonstrated by its inertia in addressing the Chingwizi issue. As a transit camp, the basic truth and expectation of the victims was that they would not stay at the camp for a long time but would be resettled in a better place at the earliest convenience. When one juxtaposes the two stories, that is, “Lingering hardships after Tokwe-Mukorsi floods” and “Flood victims struggle to adjust to camp conditions” one can deduce that in the former, government officials were optimistic, as it were, to find a solution to the crisis. They would visit the camp regularly and promise to assist the victims of the floods. In the latter, even the then Minister of State for Masvingo, Kudakwashe Bhasikiti, sounds pessimistic. “Kudakwashe Bhasikiti, the then Minister of State for Masvingo Province, said some

villagers are being diagnosed with stress-related illnesses at the clinic. He said villagers were used to working in their fields but now there is nothing much to do”.

### **Preferred meanings**

The two stories are written in a way which depicts the government as uncaring and indifferent to the plight of the Tokwe-Mukorsi flood victims. Even young children are adding their voices to the failure of the government to expedite the relocation of the villagers to a place of safe dwelling. By stating that the government dumped the villagers in the open without any means of survival denotes authorities who can simply trample on the human rights of its people with impunity. The words “poor planning on government’s part” is meant to expose the government for lack of efficiency and foresight. Considering the government’s relationship with NGOs particularly with regard to elections and the politics of governance and human rights, one would conclude that the government has been cowed by the Chingwizi crisis for it to approach the latter for assistance. The government has been at loggerheads with various NGOs for more than two decades and has threatened on several occasions to ban some of them. It shows a government which solely embraces the international community, NGOs and humanitarian aid groups when it is in a crisis. There is an element of insincerity and double standards on the part of the government.

The two stories strongly show that there is no imminent solution to the plight of the villagers at Chingwizi. The highlighting of the role being played by Unicef in providing water bowsers, gives an impression that the government is insensitive because it could have played the same role instead of waiting for an international organisation. Furthermore, the story “Flood victims struggle to adjust to camp conditions” depicts people who are enterprising as demonstrated by setting up of makeshift flea markets at the camp to sell vegetables, footwear and other wares. It is only that they lack a supportive government. Overall, the two stories depict a government which is insensitive, uncaring, untrustworthy and poor at planning. The selection of voices that are critical of the government’s lethargic approach to solving the crisis may not be coincidental.

Caple and Bednareck (2013) postulate that it is clear that news-discourse plays an important part in the struggle to affirm a single, uni-accentual value for signs. News-discourse is hostile to ambiguities and seeks to validate its suppression of the alternative possibilities intersecting its signs by reference either to 'the facts of the story' or to 'normal usage'. By so doing, the media submerge other readings of the text and foist their preferred meanings on the readers. Word choices, syntax, metaphors, descriptions, arguments and visual images are deliberately selected and employed in an endeavour to construct a particular meaning. Another important aspect is the issue of news values, what makes an environmental story newsworthy. Palmer (2000:31), for example, takes the event as the departure point in assessing the 'universal' criteria of newsworthiness, but stresses the importance of context in assessing the relevance of these criteria to the structures of particular events. In other words, 'news value consists of that aspect of an event which is in accordance with the timeliness, interest, importance, etc., of the event's relationship to its context'. Conley and Lambie (2006: 42) concur, as they posit that news values exist in the 'chemistry of an event, comment or circumstance that combine to produce news'. They further postulate that:

News values will determine whether stories are to be pursued. They will determine whether, if pursued, they will then be published. They will determine, if published, where the stories will be placed in news presentation. Having been placed, news values will determine to what extent the public will read them. (Conley & Lambie 2006: 42).

#### **4.2 Flood victims struggle to adjust to camp conditions**

Basically, the two stories are predominantly lambasting the government for its apparent inertia to address the plight of the Tokwe-Mukorsi flood victims. Zivanai Muzorodzi, an official with the Community Tolerance, Reconciliation and Development (Cotrad) mentions that the villagers were supposed to be relocated several years ago but funds to compensate them were allegedly diverted by government officials. The news reporter wittingly or unwittingly fails to probe the official to elaborate on the allegations of the diversion of the funds. Furthermore, the reporters of the two stories could have verified the information with the Masvingo provincial minister of state or the then minister of Local Government, Ignatius Chombo. Simply mentioning the diversion of funds without substantiating the facts makes it rather difficult to establish whether there was an act of corruption or not by government

officials. Furthermore, it would have been important to state the amount which went missing and whether it was coming from the Treasury or from donors.

The journalists could have enhanced the ‘informing’ aspect of the media by probing for more information from the Harare city authorities. The paper with its reputation of being a fierce critic of the government would be expected to investigate the story and expose the government and subject its officials to public scrutiny over the issue of missing funds. Reporters could have asked the villagers and the donors whether it would not have been prudent to comply with the government directive to relocate to a better place away from Tokwe-Mukorsi Dam and then fight for the compensation later. Had they complied several years back, probably they would not have incurred the losses they experienced due to the floods which wiped away their homes, livestock and other belongings. The omissions which pervade the two stories clearly points to flawed journalism on the part of the newspaper’s reporters. One would expect these reporters to even do some investigative journalism so as to present valid points which would ultimately set an agenda for the expediting of the relocation and compensation of the villagers. Usually, those topics given the most coverage by the news media are likely to be the topics audiences identify as the most pressing issues of the day. It was incumbent upon the reporters to tackle the Chingwizi issue by providing sufficient information and cause the topic to be on the government agenda and to stay put. It is quite apparent that the reporters were bent on ensuring that the blame frame predominates in the Chingwizi story at the expense of other frames such as the dependency frame. Other victims of the floods had found something to do to fend for their families in the camp yet others were simply complaining that the government was not helping them and they had nothing to do.

The reporters inadvertently failed to employ the development media theory when they mentioned in the story, “Flood victims struggle to adjust to camp conditions” that some enterprising villagers have taken to selling vegetables and soya mince. Others are selling clothes and footwear at a makeshift flea market while others have put up tuck-shops where they are selling different wares. The media could have highlighted how people in a crisis are engaging in self-sustaining projects amid a calamity. In situations like the Chingwizi crisis, the media could lend themselves as tools which can be used to advocate and agitate for socio-economic development and social change.

One can argue that it is the nature of journalists either to include or to exclude certain information in a story so as to influence and manipulate readers or audiences in the way they decode media texts. Pan and Kosci (1993) cited in Golan, Johnson and Wanta (2010) posit that the way journalists present and frame issues impacts public understanding and policy formation. According to Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley (1997); Price, Tewksbury & Powers (1997), experimental studies have also demonstrated how the emphasis given to competing frames is reflected in subjects' interpretations of the issue manipulated.

The two stories, "Lingering hardships after Tokwe-Mukorsi" and "Flood victims struggle to adjust to camp conditions" are written in a way which stifles and confines debate to the blame frame. Without trying to absolve the government for its failure to expeditiously resolve the Chingwizi crisis, the reportage leaves a lot to be desired. By simply dwelling on the shortcomings of the government and the attendant abuse of office by its senior officials narrows the scope of a possible robust and balanced debate on the plight of the flood victims. This portrayal of the crisis expands the debate as the reader may want to know what could have been omitted and what impact it could have to the story. Highlighting the crisis is quite commendable but chaperoning it to pedestrian perspectives is wholly unprofessional on the part of the media. Reporters are expected to investigate and probe for answers from the relevant persons with the aim of providing media consumers with objective and balanced stories. Lichtenberg cited in Curran and Gurevitch (1996) posits that the objectivity of journalism has come increasingly under fire in recent years. The criticisms come from a variety of quarters and take several forms. Some say that journalism is not objective; others that it cannot be objective; and still others that it should not be objective. Odd as it may seem, sometimes the same critic seems to be making all of these charges at the same time. Lichtenberg further asserts that one challenge comes from critics – from across the political spectrum who claim that the media have misrepresented their views or have not reported their activities impartially. Some say that the media have a 'liberal bias' that they overemphasize unrest and dissent, or look too hard for muck to rake. Government officials may even blame the media for exaggerating the Chingwizi crisis.

The failure of the reporters to effectively engage government officials on why there seems to be no imminent solution to the Chingwizi crisis denies the reader the opportunity to hear and

possibly comprehend both sides of the story. The statement by the then minister of Local Government, Ignatius Chombo,

“The government through relevant ministries is mobilising resources to adequately resettle these people. We are going to see that no one will starve so the Treasury will be releasing funds to cater for everything including funds,”

*Daily News on Sunday*, February 16, 2014. p.7

could have invited an interrogation from the reporters. By failing to engage the minister to elaborate on why it had taken long to address the Chingwizi crisis reflects on the reporters' bias, that is, to cast the government in bad light. As journalists they could have probed for more information from the minister. The story is bereft of balance and objectivity so much that one would daresay that the paper is desirous to set a particular agenda. Boyd-Barrett and Newbold (1995) assert that readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a story and its position. Therefore, the reporters of the Chingwizi story sought to give salience to a half-baked story and perhaps by default put it on the public agenda and fight to keep it on that public agenda. Their failure to furnish the reader with more detail on what the government had done in way of trying to ameliorate the villagers' plight may be a deliberate ploy to give a picture of a government which does not care about the welfare of its people and has no regard for human rights. Furthermore, the portrayal of a government which is indifferent to the people's needs may have political ramifications considering that this is a rural constituency from where the ruling party gets most of its votes in elections. According to Boyd-Barrett and Newbold (ibid), the information in the mass media becomes the only contact many have with politics. The pledges, promises, and rhetoric encapsulated in news stories, columns, and editorials constitute much of the information upon which a voting decision has to be made. Therefore, to have left out information about what the government were claiming to be putting in place to address the Chingwizi crisis could undermine the ruling party's (ZANU P.F.) stranglehold on some of these rural constituencies.

The frame of hopelessness in the “Lingering hardships after Tokwe-Mukorsi” floods story as highlighted in the statement given by Netsai Muhamba poses critical questions to the roles of the government and NGOs. “*We no longer go to school at all, our uniforms and books were swept away in the floods*”. The reporters should have sought explanation from the



government officials and NGOs why they had failed to construct a makeshift school and provide learning materials for the school going age children in the camp. Ironically, Unicef is also said to be providing water bowsers for the villagers but fails to assist in addressing the educational needs of the children. Education is also a human right which one would expect the Unicef to be conscious of and sensitive to. A similar hopelessness frame is repeated in the story "Flood victims struggle to adjust to camp conditions". A death in the camp brings the plight of the villagers to the fore.

A woman called Chipomadhura died at the camp last week, her husband, Phillip Hambure was engrossed in grief saying he did not know where he would bury his wife. "Our home was swept away by the flood in Tokwe-Mukorsi so I cannot bury her there, I cannot also bury her in this camp because it is not proper," he said. "I will ask her relatives to bury her at their place."

*Daily News on Sunday*, March 23, 2014. p.6

Considering that there are no mortuary facilities at the camp, and the time lapse between the death of the woman and the day the burial would finally take place, one wonders what the condition of the corpse would be then. The health hazards such a situation poses to others in the camp is, however, not explored and highlighted by the reporters. The reporter could have interviewed authorities on the plans they had, if any, on tackling health and death issues in the camp. Such probing could have broadened the scope of the debate on the Chingwizi crisis, and perhaps galvanise authorities into action in addressing the problem. But the media should be commended for bringing such an unfortunate incident to the attention of the readers. Reporters should have stated the value of the funds which were diverted by government officials; this would have shown that they were really keen on informing the readers. Furthermore, the story could have indicated where the funds were diverted to so that the story does not sound like a mere rumour. Whilst the then minister of Local Government spoke about mobilising funds and other resources, the reporter should have asked what had happened to the funds which were allegedly raised in the past. Zivanai Muzorodzi of Cotrad had attributed the Chingwizi crisis to government's poor planning. "He said the confusion surrounding the evacuation shows poor planning on government's part as most of the villagers were supposed to be relocated several years ago but funds to compensate them were allegedly diverted by government officials".

The reporters should have mentioned the element of corruption which was implied in the statement above. By doing so, it would have given another dimension to the Chingwizi issue. The stories have been blaming the crisis on government indifference *inter alia*. The corruption frame would have opened another space to interrogate the Chingwizi crisis whereby citizens and political and civic organisations would engage the government on its sincerity to address the crisis. The reporters could have put the government officials to task on the government's priorities considering that some of the flood victims are dying in the camp. The reporters are expected to explore all angles of a story so as to furnish the reader and policy makers with adequate information which would help them make informed decisions and formulate sound policies. The space occupied by the media today was historically referred to as the agora in ancient Greece. It was the place of assembly where the free citizens debated matters of public concern; where public opinion was formulated and asserted. Watson and Hill posit that public spaces have long been surrendered to enclosure or to shopping malls, but the concept remains; its practice continues at second remove – the media speak for the people, purporting to articulate and defend public interest in their role as watchdogs, guarding the public from the abuses of the state (Watson, J. and Hill, A., 2003).

The following story, “Cyanide poaching: Pair acquitted” focus on the use of deadly chemicals to decimate animal populations. This section will analyse two other stories, namely, “Who is exterminating Africa's elephants?”, and “How culling saves animals”.

#### **4.3 Chemicals and the Environmental reporting: Cyanide poaching: Pair acquitted”**

##### **4.3 Words and symbols**

In this category of wildlife poaching are three stories which will, however, be analysed and interpreted separately. The stories are; “Cyanide poaching: Pair acquitted”, “Who is exterminating Africa's elephants?” and “How culling saves animals”.

The story “Cyanide poaching: Pair acquitted” (p.3) was published on January 12, 2014. The story is about the acquittal of two suspected poachers who killed hundred jumbos at the Hwange National Park. The words which are dominant in the story so as to give a particular

decoding of the media text by the reader are; elephant poachers, on-going cyanide saga, acquitted, not guilty, violating, evidence, poisoning elephants, possession of ivory, deadly chemical, clients, detectives fraud charges, and bribe.

The headline “Cyanide poaching: Pair acquitted” attracts the reader to read on and find out why such perverts like poachers would be acquitted. Headlines advertise the story. According to Harris, Leiter and Johnson (1992) a good headline will reach out and grab the reader. When it is bright, informative, clear and accurate, the readers are hooked. The reader would also question the country’s judiciary system. The lead also is equally important. Mencher (2008) postulates that the effective story lead meets two requirements, that is, it captures the essence of the event, and it cajoles the reader or listener into staying awhile. The lead “Two suspected elephant poachers in the on-going cyanide saga that saw 100 elephants at the Hwange National Park being killed last year have been acquitted” attracts the reader to read on.

The issue of lack of corroboration in statements put forward by witnesses who gave conflicting evidence may create a perception that the police had not done their work conscientiously. This becomes apparent when one considers the statement; “The detectives were facing fraud charges after demanding a bribe from Khumalo whom they nabbed with a vehicle carrying ivory”. The picture of the elephant carcasses in the story paints a grim picture of the state of the country’s environment conservation. Considering that government officials visited the site, one becomes hopeful that a solution is in the offing, that is, if he/she has faith in the government.

### **Preferred meanings**

The theme of cyanide poaching sets an agenda for the powers that be to urgently respond to the imminent decimation of the country’s wildlife due to poaching activities. The story “Cyanide poaching: Pair acquitted”, is replete with innuendos which point to police inefficiency, and corruption.

“The detectives were facing fraud charges after demanding a bribe from Khumalo whom they nabbed with a vehicle carrying ivory. The detectives included Assistant Inspector Alois Gakata, Wellington Jena, Shadreck Rore, Donald Dube and Chrispen Musonza”.

*Daily News on Sunday*, January 12, 2014 p.3

There is a perception cast in this story that the police force are also complicit in the poaching of elephants. Needless to say, such unprofessionalism on the part of the police militates against the fight against poaching of wildlife. Furthermore, from the story it appears there is a ready market for the poached ivory in Harare. “They allegedly took a total of 22 tusks weighing 249 kg which they transported to Harare for sale to potential clients”. The way the elephants were being killed by the poachers, that is, use of cyanide, clearly demonstrated that the poachers needed to be confronted by a greater force. The story also shows that the government has acts which were enacted to ensure that the environment is effectively and efficiently managed. “Khumalo and Mafu had pleaded not guilty to four charges of violating the Environmental Management Agency and Parks and Wildlife Acts”. However, the gross violations of these acts reveal that there is not much commitment on the part of the government to decisively deal with the scourge of poaching. The story infers that there is a syndicate in this evil practice of poaching; some supplying the cyanide and some the dehorning of the elephants, the transporting and selling of the tusks. “The State further alleges that Dube later supplied the chemical to Khumalo who then passed it on to Mafu and Tshuma. The deadly chemical was later poured into different animal watering holes as well as into the grazing lands in the Hwange National Park”.

The picture of the elephant carcasses serves to show the barbarity of the poachers, it cries to the government and other relevant entities for attention. Curan and Gurevitch (1996) posit that in understanding such images we bring a number of frameworks to bear, a number of discourses which help to organise meaning. We draw on different kinds of knowledge and a study of that process suggests that the meaning of a photograph is not hidden or immanent in the picture but constructed through a range of different signifying practices (Curan and Gurevitch, 1996). During the process of recognition and understanding we relate what we see in a photograph, the visual signs, to a wider set of understandings. Some of these may be signified directly from what is in the photograph; others depend on cultural knowledge which

can be activated by the photograph. Readers of the story would perhaps relate the picture to the moral decadence corroding our nation, for example, corruption. Readers could even relate the picture to a breakdown of law and order in the country. Some could even read as government negligence and ineptitude. Other readers could even zero in on the then minister of Environment, Saviour Kasukuwere; querying whether he is efficiently discharging his duties when such a great number of elephants is being killed by poachers.

The story, “Cyanide poaching: Pair acquitted” has glaring gaps, for example, why the police did not make an effort to investigate the supposed destination of the ivory which they intercepted being ferried to Harare. This could have assisted the State in presenting its case in the court. Such information could also help to bust the poaching syndicate. It is also interesting to not why the police failed to present exhibit in court when they had actually intercepted the suspects with 22 tusks. “They allegedly took a total of 22 tusks weighing 249 kg which they transported to Harare for sale to potential clients”. In the story, “Cyanide poaching: Pair acquitted”, the then minister Kasukuwere should have been mentioned in this story particularly concerning his position on the rampant poaching occurring in game parks. His ineptitude in dealing with the poaching menace is quite apparent as demonstrated by his failure to mobilise resources to assist game parks in protecting wildlife from poachers. As the then minister of Environment, it is only rational that he should have been seen spearheading the fight against poachers. The journalists should have interviewed the minister on why the perennial problem of poaching continues without any sign of being solved when the country has got security forces that can be roped in to assist the game rangers.

Furthermore, failure to question why the police failed to apprehend the person who supplied the drum of cyanide creates a gap in the story. It clearly shows that the newspaper had no intention to get to the bottom of the story. The newspaper failed to employ investigative journalism with regard to the story on cyanide poisoning. Even the acquittal of the five detectives who had allegedly demanded a bribe from Khumalo begs more answers. One would expect the magistrate to ask for the tusks as exhibit from the detectives since there was a prima facie case that they had seen the ivory since they demanded a bribe to cover up the offence.

The legal frame of this story raises more questions than answers. The suspect Clever Khumalo was intercepted by detectives with a vehicle ferrying poached ivory to Harare and the detectives were later arrested for demanding a bribe from the suspect. But because of “lack of evidence” both the suspected poachers and the detectives were acquitted. The lack of sound explanation on why and how Khumalo was released from police custody weakens the story. “Khumalo was reportedly intercepted by Harare detectives while on his way to deliver the ivory to an unnamed buyer but was later released under unclear circumstances”.

The hard news genre of the story, “Cyanide poaching: Pair acquitted”, limits discussion and proper analysis of a happening. The reporter simply restricts himself to what transpired at the court without endeavouring to interrogate some of the story’s grey areas such as the acquittal of the suspected poacher and the detectives who were alleged to have demanded a bribe from the former. Furthermore, the story limits itself in that it is all about the suspects, the detectives and the court. No witnesses or other sources are quoted in the story, hence objectivity and balance are compromised. McQuail (2010) asserts that many aspects of news form are clearly related to the pursuit of objectivity in the sense of facticity or factualness (McQuail, 2010). McQuail posits that a key element of facticity is attribution to very credible or positively verified sources. Smith cited in McQuail (2010) weighs in saying without an attribution of credibility by the audience, news could not be distinguished from entertainment or propaganda.

Limiting such an important story exclusively to the information that transpired in the court would be doing injustice to the readers and the nation at large. Discourse has been limited to court proceedings without interrogating the economic frame which is brought into picture by the amount of tusks which were recovered from the suspected poacher. The value should have been quantified in monetary terms so as to illustrate the haemorrhaging of natural resources and the prejudice to the fiscus.

Failure to interrogate the country’s judiciary system’s efficiency, for instance, detaining suspects for three months in remand prison tends to give an impression of accepting mediocrity. “Meanwhile, the court has also acquitted the five detectives from Harare who had

spent three months in remand prison, after the court failed to gather incriminating evidence against them”. Assuming that the acquittals signify innocence on the part of the suspected poachers and the detectives, the reporter should have queried in his story why then Khumalo had been arrested by the detectives if there was no ivory to talk about.

The newspaper confined the story to the court verdict which left the suspected poachers and the detectives off the hook without developing an extension which would query the safety of the other jumbos considering that there was evidence that a dangerous substance like cyanide was now in the wrong hands. Furthermore, the court chose to concern itself solely with the illegal acts of poaching and bribery without also broadening the scope to include the illegal acquisition of the dangerous chemical and its far reaching adverse effects on the environment. “Dube reportedly went to her former workmate only identified as Buzuzu who was working at NFS Chemicals where she acquired a drum of cyanide without necessarily following the requirements, the court was told”. One would have expected the newspaper to furnish readers with information of whether Buzuzu and her company were investigated considered the havoc which was wreaked by their chemical. The story gives an impression that the magistrate was simply concerned with issues of the intercepted ivory and the bribery case whilst ignoring the bigger picture, that is, the danger posed to national wildlife.

The bribery frame is conveniently overlooked by the magistrate. Considering that the country is reeling from the negative effects of corruption. One would expect the newspaper to further interrogate the issue perhaps through an editorial as they, *Daily News on Sunday*, usually do with some court cases with a political bearing. Failing to probe both the detectives and the suspected poachers on the identity of the prospective clients for the ivory creates glaring gaps both in the court judgement and the completeness, facticity and objectivity of the reporting. The story sets an agenda for the government and its entities, that is, the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) and Parks and Wildlife to retool themselves and decisively deal with the poaching scourge. There is need to mobilise resources, both human, financial and material to fight poaching activities which threaten to decimate the country’s fauna. There is also need to revisit the EMA and Parks and Wildlife Acts and see how best they can be strengthened so as to empower these bodies to effectively and efficiently address practices which pose danger to wildlife and the environment in general.

Considering that EMA has the responsibility to ensure effective and environmental conservation, society expects it to be delivering in terms of environmental management. Furthermore, the agency should be liaising with the traditional leadership to curb the vice of poaching. Two of EMA's core values compel it to work closely with the traditional leadership and members of the community in upholding the ethos of environmental conservation:

- Unhu/Ubuntu is the essence of humanity and EMA has vested interest in upholding this core value.
- EMA expects to uphold local traditional values in all its areas of operation. This includes working with local leadership and local people by enhancing local customs that enrich the environment. With these core values, the agency shall be able to achieve its vision of becoming a world class lead agency in environmental protection and sustainable management of natural resources.

Environmental reporters should engage EMA to establish whether the agency is liaising with the community leaders in the fight against the scourge of poaching. Furthermore, journalists should also be conversant with the environmental ethos as espoused by the indigenous people in the conservation of the environment. Reporters should be conversant with the essence of unhu/Ubuntu and how these values can help in the management of the environment by the agency and the communities. Perhaps, readers would be curious to know why the violation of the environment seems to continue unabated in the presence of such noble core values of EMA.

Another story that deals with the reporting of poaching and possible protection of wildlife is, "How culling saves animals". This story, "How culling saves animals" postulates how the zoo concept could help preserve animal species through the culling of some of the animal populations. It is argued that culling would create adequate space for the preserved animals, and the available resources like grazing areas and drinking water would then cater for reasonable animal populations.



#### 4.4 How culling saves animals

##### 4.4 Words and symbols

The opinion piece “How culling saves animals” (30/03/14 p.8) focuses on strategies which can be employed to save animals from becoming extinct. The writer of the “Who is exterminating Africa’s elephants”, Lesley Dickie, deliberately and tactfully selected words which would, to a certain degree, influence the readers’ perception and comprehension of the concept of culling animals. The theme of culling animals is informed by words such as zoos, aquariums, healthy animals, culling, endangered species, collapsing at an alarming rate, extinct, wild, sanctuary, vulnerable, biological diversity, and animal rights activists. The lead of the story is a persuasion and a critic itself. “It is easy to criticise zoos and aquariums when healthy animals are culled, particularly when they are from endangered species”. The story cautions attention to the issue of seeking remedies to the probable decimation of animal populations. It is in this context that the article proposes the rationale of culling healthy animals. “If we accept that some action is better than none, then we also have to accept that managing viable populations of animals over the long term until their habitats are stabilised requires some difficult decisions, including the culling of healthy animals that won’t help the species stay adaptable and immune to disease”.

The inclusion of OpEds in the study of environmental stories published was expected to broaden the scope of environmental stories published in the newspaper. Views on environmental issues by freelance writers can to a certain extent galvanise a media house to have an appreciation of a particular beat. For instance, the issue of culling healthy animals which was written by Lesley Dickie in the issue of the *Daily News on Sunday* (30/03/14) has the potential of further coverage by the newspaper’s environmental reporter. Another OpEd “Who is exterminating Africa’s elephants?” by Andreas Wislon-Spath (*Daily News on Sunday*, 16/11/14, p.8) provides a platform for the African governments to find ways and means of addressing the poaching scourge. According to the New York Times, the opinion section operates editorially independently from the rest of the newspaper. It is the section’s unique mission both to be the voice of The Times, and to challenge it. The purpose of the Op. Ed. page is neither to reinforce nor to counterbalance the Times’ own editorial position.

## **Preferred meanings**

The way the story is written, that is, diction and slant, is a well calculated exercise designed to give a particular meaning. The lead of the story sets an agenda that it is prudent to cull animals if at all wildlife is to be effectively and efficiently managed. The assertion sounds like a propaganda technique, bandwagon, whereby it is denoted that if you are not with the crowd, then you are lagging behind. “It is easy to criticise zoos and aquariums when healthy animals are culled, particularly when they are from endangered species”. The statement infers that whoever is against the culling of the animals is either ignorant of the environmental dynamics or does not care about the animals. The culling issue is a media agenda which being put onto governments’ agenda and would strive to keep it on the government agenda until there is a buy-in from the government of their position of culling animals. “It’s not always easy to understand the logic behind such a decision, but to get a picture of why good zoos take particular actions; one has to understand the context and the alternatives”. The preferred meaning is that zoos should cull some animals in order to efficiently cater for those that remain. There are animal populations which are collapsing at a faster rate due to acts of poaching and other factors such as people’s increasing need for natural resources like agricultural land and living space.

The idea to support the culling of animals is put in a way that the reader and authorities are expected to conclude that there is no better alternative to culling. The article buttresses this perception by this explanation,

Animal reserves in the most vulnerable areas are struggling to protect their animals from the scourge of poachers, while other habitats are destroyed by the effects of deforestation and increasingly climate change, a problem that all of the world’s governments acting in concert have been unable to check even slightly.

*Daily News on Sunday*, March 30, 2014. p.8

Culling is therefore portrayed as ‘mercy killing’; an action undertaken so as to save the animals earmarked for culling from the vagaries of inadequate resources and the brutality of poaching. There is an invitation to the persuasion that even world governments have failed to effectively address the issue of wild populations of animals which are collapsing at an

alarming rate. The failure by governments is even highlighted by their failure to honour international treaties.

Indeed governments have been unable even to uphold their obligations under the Aichi Targets to assist in the protection of endangered species and to teach their populations about the value of biological diversity, obligations that have been almost entirely out-sourced to zoos and museums.

*Daily News on Sunday*, March 30, 2014 p.8

Embedded in the environmental discourse of “How culling saves animals” is a subtle admission by the current generation that earlier generations had a sound and sustainable relationship with the environment. They co-existed with the environment so much that they were able to bequeath to future generations a rich and healthy environment which the current generation has dismally failed to manage. This is highlighted in the story above; “Zoos inherited a legacy of animal keeping from a previous age that did not understand the havoc we are wreaking on the planet”.

On another note, the story wants the reader to support the idea of the zoo and reject that of the sanctuary. The reporter discreetly expresses the irrationality of adopting sanctuaries instead of zoos.

Say we did stop zoos from breeding and transformed them into “sanctuaries”. Immediately we would need to give up the notion that we can save our most endangered species from extinction – the infrastructure in the wild just isn’t there for some species and in many Eaza zoos we care for species that are already extinct in the wild. Next we would need to decide what to do with the animals: Should we keep them in these new sanctuaries, unable to breed, until they die?

*Daily News on Sunday*, March 30, 2014 p.8

The preferred “breeding zoo” frame is cast in such a way that there is no better alternative in as far as conservation of wildlife is concerned. The frame depicts sanctuaries as places of wildlife stagnation and demise. Zoos are ‘glorified places’ where there is growth and flourishing of wild animals. This study agrees with Franklin et al. (2005) who postulate that media, through news values, tend to prefer particular broad ways of framing issues. Media

have been criticised for favouring episodic frames that focus on individual actions over thematic frames that focus on systemic concerns.

What is included or excluded in a story provides meaning to a text. The agenda-setting in the *Daily News on Sunday* story “How culling saves animals” deliberately ignores some fundamental facts such as the failure of individual states to come with effective measures to curb the poaching of animals. The story does not succinctly explain what measures have been put in place to assist people co-existing with wildlife to effectively and sustainably utilise such environment to better their lives. Simply bemoaning the destruction of the environment without proffering grassroots solutions may not be effective in the long run. Involving the local people in addressing environmental degradation or the decimation of animal populations has the probability of creating a citizenship mentality in the people. The story sets an agenda for governments and other organisations to accept the zoo concept as a panacea to the killing of large numbers of animals by poachers and lack of space.

By suggesting that the decimation of animal populations could be similar in the rest of the world might not be correct considering that in most parts of Africa, factors such as corruption, political instability; civil conflict and lack of rule of law have immensely contributed to the destruction of the environment. But the same might not obtain in developed countries in the north. The story obscures a glaring gap in elaborating what individual African states are doing to ameliorate the poaching scourge.

Wild populations of animals are collapsing at an alarming rate. Since 1997, for example, the population of giraffes in Africa has plummeted by more than 50%, with two subspecies becoming extinct in the wild, and leaving only 240 members of another subspecies in a single population centre. This pattern is replicated all over the world; it is driven by our increasing need for natural resources such as palm oil, agricultural land, or living space.

*Daily News on Sunday*, March 30, 2014 p.8

Probably, the reader of the story might be interested to know whether there are any efforts being made by the developed world to help African countries conserve their wildlife since animals are a major attraction in the tourism industry. The African philosophy dictates that

the current population does not solely conserve the environment without utilising it so as to pass it on to future generations in its virgin state, instead, they utilise it sustainably and bequeath it to posterity in a good state. This literary detour of such an important aspect of African environmental management by the writer weakens the environmental management discourse. By simply presenting two paradigms, that is, zoo and sanctuary; obviously precludes other approaches. The “zoo frame” fails to recognise that driving all animals into zoos is tantamount to alienating nature from human beings who naturally are expected to nurture it. The story does not elaborate on aquariums which are only mentioned in the lead. It would have been important to explain the challenges which are being experienced or could be encountered with the aquarium concept.

The journalist does not explain why animal rights organisations would not want anybody to enjoy seeing animals in a zoo and learn about them. “Animal rights organisations would like to make sure that nobody enjoys seeing such animals and learning about them from zoo visits....”

A closer look reveals that the zoo concept is essentially driven by the profit suasion than moral suasion. The story tells that zoos are well oiled financially due to the large numbers of visitors who patronise them.

“How culling saves animals” has confined the debate to the pros and cons of adopting the zoo or the sanctuary concepts as a way of saving animal populations from extinction. The discussion had the potential of engaging other methods of conserving wildlife employed in other communities, for example, the planned co-existence between humans and animals. That approach was acceptable since the article purports to treat the issue of environmental management from a global perspective.

Animal reserves in the most vulnerable areas are struggling to protect their animals from the scourge of poachers, while other habitats are destroyed by the effects of deforestation and increasingly climate change, a problem that all of the world’s governments acting in concert have been unable to check even slightly.

*Daily News on Sunday*, March 30, 2014 p.8

Perhaps the story could have done justice to the issue of culling healthy animals by suggesting how the challenges of deforestation and rapid climate change could be addressed by governments. From the story, one would deduce that there is a fragmented approach to the issue of conserving wildlife. The environmental discourse, in essence, cannot overlook the effects of climate change and deforestation on the existence of fauna. It is apparent that the writer has adopted an activist approach to whip readers and policy makers to support the zoo concept, even in the absence of a balanced discussion of the concept.

Assuming that zoos have become the last line of defence in the protection of animals, the culling of the same animals would seem ironical. In fact, more zoos could be built in areas where the natural habitats have been destroyed. Those in support of the zoo concept seem to give the impression that they have the resources.

Zoos in reputable zoo associations worldwide are the fourth largest donors to conservation in the world; are animal rights groups going to replace the hundreds of millions of dollars that zoos currently donate?

*Daily News on Sunday*, March 30, 2014 p.8

With such resources, it would not be farfetched to believe or expect zoos to fund the establishment of more zoos so as to avoid extinction of animal populations through poaching, and the reduction of animals through culling of healthy animals. Confining the debate to the rationale of supporting the continued existence of zoos without expounding on the reasons why animal rights organisations would resist the idea of people seeing animals and learning about them from zoo visits, inadvertently narrows the scope of discussion. The story should have explained why the animal rights organisations would be against zoo visits if they were well informed of the benefits derived from such visits and how they assisted in protecting some animal species from total annihilation. What is apparent is that the media seek to set an agenda to promote zoos at the expense of other options. In most cases, the media would borrow from the public agenda and make it its own before selling it to the government, after which the media would strive to keep the environment agenda on the government's agenda. According to Uscinski and Trumbo, in the case of the environment – the public sets the agenda to some extent. It has been argued that the media have agenda-setting effects on the general public mainly when reporting about newsworthy events such as wars, crimes or government scandals, which audiences would be naturally interested in. For issues that do not

necessarily constitute such spectacular events, including for example environmental problems, news coverage is driven by the public's concerns about the issue, including policy makers. Thus, public concerns about environmental problems rather than pure newsworthiness drive the media agenda in this case (Uscinski, 2009; Trumbo, 1995).

But the story "How culling saves animals" openly proposes to own the agenda of conserving wildlife without sounding the opinion of the public. Even the opinions of the so-called anti-zoo activists could add, possibly, an alternative or complement to the concept of environmental conservation. Unfortunately, the story dismisses off-the-cuff any other approach different to that taken by the pro-zoo constituency.

We cannot possibly release all of our animals back into a wild that is under siege, and which they would have to share with wild populations that are as large as their habitats can currently accommodate. Serious problems require serious responses. As yet, anti-zoo activists have put forward no serious alternatives; we would be interested to hear them, but we can't afford to wait.

*Daily News on Sunday*, March 30, 2014 p.8

Debate should have been widened to include the views of the public and perhaps civic society with interest in environmental issues. This would provide a marketplace of ideas from which the public and policy makers could make an informed decision and/or selection from several options available.

The third story in this section that focuses on identifying the culprits who have fuelled the decimation of Africa's elephants is "Who is exterminating Africa's elephants?" The story is about efforts being made by African governments and other members of the international community in addressing the issue of poaching. These efforts are demonstrated by the several conventions on environment which have been formulated and ratified by several countries. However, the story "Who is exterminating Africa's elephants" clearly shows the exasperation of African governments due to the callous ways being employed by the poaching syndicates to exterminate the elephants. Also of major concern is the complicity of other countries like China in the extermination of the African elephants; China provides a lucrative market for the illegal trade in ivory.

## **4.5 Who is exterminating Africa's elephants?**

### **4.5 Words and symbols**

The story “Who is exterminating Africa's elephants?” has an almost similar theme with the one in Figure 4.4 “How culling saves animals”. However, the choice of words employed by the journalists differs, and is deliberate. The reporter of “Who is exterminating Africa's elephants?” selected words like hard-hitting, exterminating, corrupt individuals, slaughter of elephants, illegal ivory, Chinese crime syndicate, crisis, rotten apples, high places, a toxic blend of government failures, corruption, under resourced, smuggled, politicians, anti-poaching activities, poaching epidemic, resurgent, and tourist attractions.

The lead of the story in Figure 4.5 depicts a bleak and gloomy picture on the survival of elephants in Africa, particularly in Tanzania. Apart from words, statistics are also employed to buttress the fact that the Tanzanian government is losing the battle against poaching and illegal ivory trade. “Africa's total elephant population has plummeted from about 1,3 million in 1979 to around 419 000 today.

### **Preferred meanings**

The story “Who is exterminating Africa's elephants” of 16 November 2014 sought to give the impression that African governments had already lost the battle against the poaching of elephants. The corruption frame underpinning this story demonstrates that African governments are somehow complicit in the extermination of the continent's elephants.

The situation is complex, involving many more people than just a few rotten apples in high places, but the EIA (Environmental Investigation Agency) report emphasises that the crisis has its root causes in ‘a toxic blend of government failures, corruption and criminality’ and that ultimate responsibility lies with ‘the highest levels of government.

*Daily News on Sunday*, November 16, 2014 p.8

Implied in the story is that China is indirectly aiding the extermination of Africa's elephants by providing a ready and robust market for the illegal ivory. “Between 2011 and 2013 a total



of 116 tonnes of smuggled elephant ivory was seized by authorities, China being the predominant destination”. But when one juxtaposes this conduct by China and its megaphone investment policy that it wants to help Africa develop economically, the preferred meaning questions China’s sincerity. Apart from the corruption frame, the story sought to denote some degree of ineptitude on the part of the government which culminates in the under-resourcing of wildlife reserves and poor management. Furthermore, the judiciary is attacked for meting out lenient sentences to convicted poachers.

The main problems include under-resourced and poorly protected wildlife reserves, mismanagement of the hunting industry, a failure to enforce wildlife laws, low conviction rates when cases are brought to court, and collusion between officials and ivory traffickers.

*Daily News on Sunday*, November 16, 2014 p.8

In view of the foregoing information, it is apparent that the Tanzanian government is fighting a losing battle against the perpetrators. The fight against the decimation of elephant populations is also being rendered ineffective by some positions taken by international bodies such as the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

The ban has since been undermined by CITES-sanctioned sales of ivory drawn from the stockpiles of Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa – a concession which critics claim has contributed to the resurgent demand for ivory and hence the increase in poaching.

*Daily News on Sunday*, November 16, 2014 p.8

Readers might be perturbed by the gross violation of the environment when UNEP should be monitoring and assessing global, regional and national trends related to the environment. It is charged with the responsibility of developing national and international tools to address environmental problems. It can be assumed that if UNEP meticulously discharge its duties, there would be amelioration in cases of the poaching of Africa’s wildlife.

The story lead states that the burgeoning illegal ivory trade in Tanzania is orchestrated largely by Chinese crime syndicate. The story omits to inform the reader whether the Tanzanian government has ever engaged the Chinese government to assist it stem the poaching tide. Readers are only told that China is the predominant destination for the illegal ivory, but they

are not informed other countries which are also destinations. Whilst the story mentions that some high ranking officials have been implicated in the illegal ivory trade, it fails to inform the reader why and how the government fails incapacitated to deal decisively with those implicated. “Yet very few of those involved have faced the legal consequences of their criminal activities”. The story depicts a system where corruption and impunity are embedded to such an extent that the government is virtually paralysed and has been reduced to the level of a mere spectator.

For balance, completeness and objectivity, the story should have made an effort to give the government side on how they intended to deal with the issue of poaching conclusively when they were not appealing to CITES to rescind its concession on the sale of ivory by Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. It was also important to interrogate the rationale behind the permission granted to the four countries in the face of rampant wildlife poaching.

This portrayal of environmental news on the extermination of the continent’s elephants broadens the debate, that is, interrogating the effectiveness of laws and policies which are in place at national, regional, continental and international levels. For instance, Zimbabwe’s EMA has the responsibility of ensuring the safety and sustainable development of the environment.

- To develop guidelines for national plans, environmental management plans (EMPs) and local environmental action plans (LEAPS);
- To regulate, monitor, review and approve environmental impact assessments;
- To regulate and monitor the management and utilization of ecologically fragile ecosystems;
- To develop and implement incentives for the protection of the environment; undertaking any works deemed necessary or desirable for the protection or management of the environment where it appears to be in the best interest of the public or where in the opinion of the Agency, the relevant authority has failed to do so.

It becomes imperative to evaluate the efficiency of the agency, that is, whether it is responding to its responsibility in as far as environmental management is concerned.

The story “Who is exterminating Africa’s elephants?” shows that the soft news genre may inadvertently overlook the importance of balance, objectivity and completeness. The opportunity was there to interview government authorities why no action was being taken against individuals and some government officials who were implicated in illicit ivory trade. Furthermore, the opportunity was there for the writer of the story to interview ruling party officials why it was failing to rein in its members so that they do not engage in corrupt practices since puts a dent on the party image.

Corruption is singled out as a key enabling factor in every stage of the illegal trade, involving local game rangers and police officers, Tanzanian Revenue Authority officers in the Indian Ocean ports through which elephant tusks are smuggled, ruling party politicians and well-connected business people.

*Daily News on Sunday*, November 16, 2014 p.8

If at all the story was to demonstrate the value of objectivity, the writer would also interview the game rangers, police and Tanzanian Revenue Authority officers on why the country seemed to be failing in its fight against poaching and the illegal trade in ivory. Probably, the remuneration is poor or the government is failing to incentivise those who are directly or indirectly responsible for the conservation of the wildlife through curbing poaching and smuggling of elephant tusks. It appears the writer was simply interested in attacking the Tanzanian government and CITES.

The legal frame was not fully explored and interrogated with regard to the fight against the extermination of the elephants of Africa.

The main problems include under-resourced and poorly protected wildlife reserves, mismanagement of the hunting industry, a failure to enforce wildlife laws, low conviction rates when cases are brought to court, and collusion between officials and ivory traffickers.

*Daily News on Sunday*, November 16, 2014 p.8

The journalist seems apprehensive to interrogate why the judiciary system is hesitant or reluctant to hand deterrent sentences to those convicted of poaching, trafficking and selling of the ivory obtained illegally. Confining the debate to the blame frame does not amply reveal the undertones in the environment discourse as it pertains to the poaching of elephants in Tanzania and other parts of Africa. It was important for the writer to highlight that the fight

against the illegal trade in ivory and the imminent extermination of the elephants would not be won without a judiciary system which is responsive and sensitive to environmental conservation. Although the content of codes of journalism mainly reflects 'western' value systems, some key elements do translate to other cultural contexts. Hafez (2002) cited in McQuail (2010) contends that there is a broad international consensus that standards of truth and objectivity should be central values of journalism.

Furthermore, it is saddening to note that the story failed to quantify the revenue the country could have lost through the illegal trade in ivory. Considering that the article furnishes the reader with statistics of elephants which were killed, it should have been easier for the article to give the monetary value. Needless to say, the illegal trade in ivory is tantamount to economic sabotage. The economic saboteur frame should have been pronounced in no uncertain terms by the writer. A weak attempt was made to smuggle in the frame when the writer bemoaned the destination of the profits; "Most of the profits from the illegal ivory trade go into the pockets of a small number of rich people". Instead, the writer should have indicated where the money should have gone, obviously the Treasury. The story lamely mentions the value of elephants to local communities without expatiating on the nature of the benefits which could accrue to local communities. By simply being tourist attractions, may not translate the existence of the herds of elephants into benefits for the local communities. "Living elephants are major tourist attractions that are significantly more valuable to local communities than dead ones".

Perhaps, the story should have spelt out the nature of benefits the local communities could derive from living elephants. It is also important that in some situations, wildlife has also become a nuisance and a threat to human livelihoods, for example, destruction of crops and maiming of human beings by elephants. Whilst raising an important point on the need to protect wildlife through international conventions such as CITES, the reporter tended to generalise on the CITES' concession to some southern African countries to trade in ivory. The four southern Africa countries had vast stockpiles of ivory which, logically, they had to sell and get money to assist in the conservation of wildlife. Obviously, the reporter should not expect the four countries to go the Kenya way of burning ivory stockpiles. Therefore, the reporter should have interrogated the CITES' concession instead of appearing to condemn it.

The ban has since been undermined by CITES-sanctioned sales of ivory drawn from the stockpiles of Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa – a concern which critics claim has contributed to the resurgent demand for ivory and hence the increase in poaching.

*Daily News on Sunday*, November 16, 2014 p.8

The reporter raises a valid point in suggesting that China could play a critical role in dealing with the issue of illegal ivory trade. “To reverse the current crisis, China must adopt and enforce a complete domestic ban on trading in ivory”. Considering China’s ruthlessness in dealing with corruption in its country, the article subtly points to that country’s double standards. One would expect the Chinese government to enforce its laws in dealing with the illegal sale of ivory. The failure by China to assist in curbing the illegal sale of ivory as inferred by the story ‘Who is exterminating Africa’s elephants?’ leaves the responsibility of conserving wildlife to Africa itself and those involved in animal rights.

Apart from the mention of statistics given on the number of elephants killed in Africa, this story is clearly limited to Tanzania, thus limiting the debate to the poaching challenge being experienced by Tanzania. “But why should anyone even care about elephant poaching in Tanzania? Simple: a growth in the illicit ivory trade is likely to encourage increased poaching elsewhere”.

Africa as a continent merely appears in two places in this story;

“Africa’s total elephant population has plummeted from about 1,3 million in 1979 to around 419 00 today”.

and

“If we can’t save Africa’s elephants, what chance do we have of saving anything else?”

*Daily News on Sunday*, November 16, 2014 p.8

Absenting Africa from the environment discourse might give a wrong impression that the continent has no grounding in environmental matters. But, nothing could be further from the truth. To substantiate the fact that Africa is a continent which is conscious and deliberately involved in environmental matters; this is accentuated by some of the provisions of the African Economic Community which is an economic institution of the African Union. The

Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community contains broad economic objectives, which touch on the environment, firstly by the general objective of promoting economic, social and cultural development. It also supports the integration of African economies in order to increase economic self-reliance and to promote an indigenous and self-sustained development; and through the specific objective of ensuring the harmonisation and coordination of environmental protection policies, among the States Parties. (<https://www.enviro-awareness.org.na/environmental-law/chapter-6.php>).

In view of this information given above, the title of the story “Who is exterminating Africa’s elephants?” is misleading because it purports to cover the continent’s challenges when in actual fact it is essentially about Tanzania’s poaching problems, corruption and a judiciary system which is not responsive to the smuggling and illicit ivory trade the country is grappling with. The story sets an agenda for the CITES to reconsider its position on the selling of ivory by the four Southern African countries. It is on record that Kenya and Tanzania have been at the forefront of insisting on the blanket banning of ivory trade.

The section below shifts from analysing stories to do with reporting poaching, use of deadly chemicals and the environment. The emphasis of analysis in the following stories is on stories that deal with climate change. The story, “Climate change fight must involve media” deals with the need to involve the media as they play an important role in creating environmental awareness among locals and the international community. What is also being highlighted in the story is the need to train journalists so that they would be able to effectively and efficiently report environmental issues. The story is reported in a manner that manifests astute deployment of certain words and symbols.

#### **4.6 “Climate change fight must involve media”**

##### **4.6 Words and symbols**

The climate change theme is quite topical these days due to the negative impact on agriculture, economies and general aspirations of Africans. Words and symbols are carefully selected in this hard news story so as to effectively communicate the desired message to the

reader. Some of the words which structure this story are; media, governments, journalists, climate change, weather, training media professionals, droughts, strengthening cooperation, media owners, investigative journalism, social media, awareness, knowledge, social instability, gender dynamics and Millenium Development Goals. Words are employed so as to highlight the importance and urgency of addressing climate change and involving the media. “As African journalists, we need to take the lead in informing Africans on the implications of climate change”. From the statement, it appears the media have been marginalised, ignored or were simply playing the second fiddle.

### **Preferred meanings**

The story ‘Climate change fight must involve media’ is meant to elicit various meanings for the reader. For example, the story sets the agenda for African governments to take the media on board in the fight to ameliorate the vagaries of dynamic climate change. Climate change has adversely affected socio-economic development on the continent. The call for African governments and the United Nations to involve the media and journalists in the fight against climate change is hinged on the assumed power of the media to influence audiences.

However, the ‘supposed’ missing link in the fight against climate change seems to be noticed by the journalists themselves instead of governments. “The call was made by leaders of unions and associations of African journalists at a meeting in the East African country”. The story suggests that Africans are failing to deal with climate changes due to lack of information, therefore journalists should play an active part in providing them with information which will help them deal with the challenges occasioned by climatic changes. There is an admission on the part of the media and journalists that there is some deficiency on their part in as far as the coverage of climate change are concerned. The impression one gets is that the media currently are not adept at reporting on climate change. This is highlighted in the statement; “We call on the African Union, the UN Economic Commission for Africa and African governments to make climate change a priority by training media professionals for better information and sensitisation on policies and decisions on climate change,” ‘reads a communiqué issued after the conference’. The story identifies unity of purpose among African governments as the panacea to the challenges of climate change. What is implied is

that Africa's governments have not been united and if they do not have a new mindset, they will continue to struggle ad infinitum. This assertion is buttressed by the statement; "African journalists noted that the African continent needed to speak with one voice in tackling climate change which was threatening African economies, health, environment and was increasing hardships, unrest and social instability".

The story adds another dimension to the issue of the media and climate change, that is, use of mobile phones. In this context, there is a view that there will be more and efficient coverage of climate change due to the ubiquity of mobile phones. Implied in the story is the acceptance and promotion of citizen journalism. Because of its nature, citizenship is more engaging and interactive and leans towards the development media theory. It has been referred to as public, participatory, democratic, guerrilla or street journalism. Public citizens play an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analysing, and disseminating news and information. Therefore, the story "Climate change fight must involve media" proposes that there be a paradigm shift in terms of information gathering, dissemination and platforms to be used. "We encourage the taking advantage of digital platforms and social media to increase knowledge and awareness on climate change and the use of mobile phones to discuss and disseminate information on climate change".

The agenda setting by the story in the *Daily News on Sunday*, "Climate change fight must involve media" (10/08/14, p.5) as hard news left gaping holes with regard to completeness as a news value. Considering that climate change has a direct impact on socio-economic stability of the continent, the reporters should have also sounded the opinion or sentiments of government officials with relation to the overall role of the media in the fight against climate change. In the absence of authorities' voice, the story may be considered as a desperate struggle to be relevant in the climate change discourse.

African governments and the United Nations have been urged to involve the media and journalists' organisations in the fight against climate change.

The call was made by leaders of unions and associations of African journalists at a meeting in the East African country.

*Daily News on Sunday*, August 10, 2014 p.5



Inasmuch as the reporters at the workshop agreed that there was need to transform the journalism curriculum so that it has a component on environmental reporting in the area of climate change, there is no background on how the media have been currently covering that area. The story does not specifically state areas where the media have been having challenges in reporting climate change. Furthermore, the reader as well as governments would want to know why the media are not employing investigative journalism in the coverage of climate change. The reporter of the story or the communiqué does not give that information. A generalised statement below does not suffice in shading light on the challenges, if any, with investigative journalism.

Strengthening cooperation between journalists, editors and media owners in tackling fundamental threat of climate change is very critical while media organisations are encouraged to provide journalists with adequate resources for investigative reporting assignments on climate challenge.

*Daily News on Sunday, August 10, 2014 p.5*

The concluding paragraph of the story seems to have simply petered out because it mentions casually apparently important issues such as gender dynamics vis-à-vis climate change. One would want to know how climate change could have a direct bearing on gender dynamics. The assumption by the reporter that everyone understands what Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) are, and what climate change may impact on them is misleading and unjournalistic, so to speak. “The implications of a changing climate are so many and so serious. They include gender dynamics to effects on the Millenium Development Goals and other gains made by African governments over the years”. The gender dynamics should have been expounded on so that the reader is not left wondering what these could be. The story in its concluding paragraph mentions “other gains made by African countries over the years”. Considering that another paragraph had insinuated that African governments had not done anything significant in decisively dealing with climate change, the mention of ‘gains’ leaves one confused. “African journalists noted that the continent needed to speak with one voice in tackling climate change which was threatening African economies, health, environment and was increasing hardships, unrest and social instability”. Considering the importance of the climate change theme to Africa, it appears that the reporter misplaced brevity because the failure by the story to elaborate on some important aspects as observed in the foregoing information makes one think that the story was used as a mere filler.

This portrayal has the potential of expanding the debate on climate change when readers question why treaties like the Kyoto Protocol are not being upheld by the powerful and rich countries. The reporter inadvertently broadened the climate change debate by pointing out the role which the media could play if African governments and the United Nations recognised their importance. Former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan with reference to environmental management remarked that,

Safeguarding the environment is a crosscutting United Nations' activity. It is a guiding principle of all our work in support of sustainable development. It is an essential component of poverty eradication and one of the foundations of peace and security (UNEP, 2006).

When the United Nations attach such importance to environmental matters, it is only logical that the media make a similar effort to keep environmental issues high on both media and government agendas.

The story "Climate change fight must involve media" failed to explain what could be the causes of climate change. It simply gave the manifestations of climate change. "Climate change has manifested itself through increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as droughts, reduced precipitation, and gradual increases in temperature". For the journalists to simply dwell on mentioning the effects of climate change without mentioning causes such as deforestation, air pollution and its effects on the ozone layer, puts the professionalism of the reporters to test. Journalists are expected to be abreast with knowledge which is relevant to social, economic and technological development of nations. Trained journalists and mainline media have voiced their concern on citizen journalism citing that unprofessional fingers are dabbling in the revered profession of journalism. But the communiqué which was issued at the end of the Nairobi meeting was suggesting something on the contrary.

The meeting acknowledged the important role played by mobile phones and social media in creating awareness in the fight against climate change.

We encourage the taking advantage of digital platforms and social media to increase knowledge and awareness on climate change and the use of mobile phones to discuss and disseminate information on climate change.

*Daily News on Sunday, August 10, 2014 p.5*

Furthermore, the story or the meeting limited the debate or tethered it to the simple idea of encouraging the UN and African governments to bring in the media into the matrix of responding to the challenge of climate change, but conveniently ignored the need to engage and persuade other countries of the world to contribute to the fight against climate change. This is necessary because the media should not only educate and provide current awareness to African citizens who might be victims of the climate change, and leave some of the perpetrators of pollution going scot-free. For instance, some of the developed countries are the major culprits of polluting the environment which results in climate change. What is apparent here is that the story sets an agenda for governments to rope in the media in the fight against climate change, improve journalism training with regard to climate change; but overlooks the need to conscientise readers on how they can effectively utilise the media in its current state to deal with climate change. The framing of the story, “Climate change fight must involve media” might have simply raised the need to capacitate the reporters without creating the ideal environment for the public to benefit from environmental information. Members of the public rely on frames to make sense of and discuss complex environmental issues. Journalists use frames to craft interesting and appealing news reports (Nisbet 2009a; Scheufele 1999).

What is conveniently ignored or overlooked is why the media are failing to have investigative journalism now, yet they are known and brag about their investigative journalism skills and exploits in areas of politics, corruption, corporate governance, inter alia. Generally, one would expect journalists to avoid investigative journalism in areas of politics and corruption considering the attendant dangers associated. There is mention of the need to involve media proprietors in the fight against climate change. The debate was not further developed in a way which could have shed light on how media owners who are generally obsessed with profit and power could simply buy in into something which is not a money spinner. Climate change is more on the side of the development media theory which is usually linked to governments and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs).

The second story on climate is “Zim’s climate changing too fast”. The story is about how Zimbabwe’s climate is changing at a rapid pace, and how it is impacting agricultural

activities and the economy in general. The reporter uses special words and symbols to manipulate the reader to appreciate the story in a certain direction.

#### **4.6 “Zim’s climate changing too fast”**

##### **4.6 Words and symbols**

The story ‘Zim’s climate changing too fast’ has words which are predominant so as to lend a certain meaning to the reader. It is the careful use of words which may promote a particular agenda or frame. These words or symbols are used for both denotation and connotation. They are employed in text so as to manipulate the reader to decode a text in a particular way as desired by the encoder. According to Entman (1993) cited in McQuail (2010) framing involves selection and salience. He summarises the main aspects of framing by saying that frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgements and suggest remedies. It is clear that a very large number of textual devices can be used to perform these activities. They include using certain words or phrases, making certain contextual references, choosing certain pictures or film, giving examples as typical, referring to certain sources and so on.

The reporter of the story ‘Zim’s climate changing too fast’ uses words like climate change, normally expected, rainfall patterns, too fast, carbon dioxide, severe storms, floods and droughts, strong winds, hail, frost, global climate, deforestation, greenhouse gases, industrialised countries, national budget, landlocked, extreme poverty and hunger, natural resources and basic needs; to explain the pace at which the country’s climate is changing.

The meteorological community in Zimbabwe agrees that Zimbabwe’s climate is changing and it will always continue to change.

However, the rate of change seems to be faster than what is normally expected over a 30-year period. What is certain is that, the climate of Zimbabwe is now characterised by many extreme events such as severe storms, floods and droughts, strong winds, hail, frost and heat waves, said Chipindu.

*Daily News on Sunday*, December 7, 2014 p. 6

It should also be noted that some of the words or phrases are employed in the context of proffering solutions. This is indicated in the following sentence; “However, the country can contribute to the global climate change by limiting deforestation, planting more trees,

reducing the dependence on fossil fuels for energy supply and encouraging use of renewable energy such as solar energy and bio gas.”

### **Preferred meanings**

As alluded before, news is not bereft of ideology, nor is it value free. According to Habermas, the publisher’s activity was confined essentially to the organisation of the flow of news and the collating of news itself. As soon as the press developed from a business in pure news reporting to one involving ideologies and viewpoints, however, and the compiling of items of information encountered the competition of literary journalism, a new element – political in the broader sense – was joined to the economic one. Bucher captures it succinctly: “From mere institutions for the publication of news, the papers became also carriers and leaders of public opinion, and instruments in the arsenal of party politics” Habermas (1989). In view of this, it should be taken as given that most news articles, regardless of subject can have an inkling of ideology therein. The same applies to climate change. It is clear that the story ‘Zim’s climate changing too fast’ informs people to brace up for the negative effects occasioned by rapid climatic changes. The story makes it categorically clear that these changes are inevitable due to pollution. It urges the Zimbabwean government to be involved in international efforts aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change on fauna and flora. The Government of Zimbabwe should be actively involved in international negotiations such as Conference of Parties, for reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases by industrialised countries, said Chipindu.

*Daily News on Sunday*, December 7, 2014, p. 6.

There is an inference that the government of Zimbabwe has been excluding itself from crucial issues like the climate change which has both direct and indirect effects on the country and its citizens. Embedded in the statement is that if Zimbabwe does not cooperate with the international community in addressing climate issues, it will drastically suffer because no individual country can effectively address climate challenges on its own. It is implied in the story that the government of Zimbabwe may not be giving priority to the issue of climate; this is buttressed by its budgetary allocation to the Meteorological Department.

Bungare said the met department was awarded \$400 000 for cloud seeding in the recently-presented national budget by minister of Finance Patrick Chinamasa, yet the department requires around \$5 million to run smoothly. Bungure also said the department is short staffed.

*Daily News on Sunday*, December 7, 2014 p.6

It also appears that the Meteorological Department is not being fully utilised by both the government and the media in as far as weather conditions and the climate in general are concerned. It is also probable that the public could be getting incorrect information. Furthermore, the department's reach is not as broad as it would want. Barnabas Chipindu, a meteorologist urged government, media and other players to have a new mindset. 'The scientist urged proper dissemination of information to the public'. "I would like to urge the policy makers and the media in Zimbabwe to consult the Meteorological Services Department and other competent meteorologists on issues of climate change so that the public is given correct information".

The preferred meaning with regard to research on climate change is that there is underfunding by the government and other national stakeholders as already alluded to in relation to budgetary allocation. "I would like to appeal to funding agencies to fund research on climate science, impact and adaptation. One needs to run an ensemble of as many as 15 global climate models in order to reduce uncertainties in climate change predictions". It is also implied in the story "Zim's climate changing too fast" that the Agritex officers are not effectively helping the farmers in giving them information about climate change so that they can plan their farming activities efficiently. This is confirmed by the Meteorological Services Department. "The onset of the rainy season has been delayed and Zimbabweans, including a large percentage of farmers in the rural areas are confused whether they should start planting or wait".

"Agritex should educate farmers that there is change. People are crying foul because they do not know what to do".

*Daily News on Sunday*, December 7, 2014 p. 7

The story explains that climate change of Zimbabwe will continue. Greenhouse gases emissions were identified as some of the causes of climate change. Countries in the developed West have suffered from the effects of climate change, some of which are caused by greenhouse gas emissions. But the story does not elaborate why Zimbabwe with its low levels of greenhouse gas emissions suffers and would continue to suffer from severe climate change. It was imperative that the reporter further explore the issue using relevant information on greenhouse gas emissions. According to UNEP (2006) to be an environmental reporter, it is necessary to have an understanding of scientific language and practice, the ability to keep abreast of environmental policy decisions and knowledge of historical environmental events. He/she should have a general understanding of current environmental concerns, and the ability to communicate all of that information to the public in such a way that it can be easily understood, despite its complexity.

Chipindu said: “Zimbabwe emits insignificant quantities for the greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, ozone and chlorofluocarbons that cause global warming and subsequent climate change”. In view of this, the reader would want an elaboration on why Zimbabwe’s climate is changing too fast. Considering that the Meteorological Services Department is ill equipped and short staffed, one wonders how reliable or accurate is the information which citizens and policy makers get from the department. The story does not tell whether consumers of the information from the department can use it with confidence or whether the information can assist in producing positive results, for example, for the farmer. This fear or concern emanates from what was highlighted by the scientist, Chipindu. “One needs to run an ensemble of as many as 15 global climate models in order to reduce uncertainties in climate change predictions”.

Furthermore, the story is quiet on how many global climate models are currently in use at the Meteorological Services Department. It is also important to know what the minister under whose jurisdiction the department falls is doing to ensure that such an important entity in terms of planning with regards to farming and other economic and social activities can be retooled so that it efficiently serves the national needs. The department is also constrained in its endeavour to effectively communicate climate information. “The Meteorological department in Zimbabwe is working hard in trying to disseminate information on climate

change but the department is limited to cellular networks, radios, television and some newspapers”. One would assume that these are sufficient media for communicating. But the story does not tell the reader what other forms of communication would be required for the dissemination of climate change information if the above mentioned is inadequate. Perhaps, there was need to have a regional comparative analysis which could then show the deficit.

McQuail (2010) posits that the core idea of agenda setting is that the news media indicate to the public what the main issues of the day are and this is reflected in what the public perceives as the main issues. The element of gate-keeping creeps in, as they filter news, that which is omitted also defines the agenda. In some instances, that which is left out is more critical than that which is included in the shaping of discourse on topical issues.

What is apparent in the story “Zim’s climate changing too fast” is the noble need to conserve environment like trees so that climate change could be managed. However, the story “Zim’s climate changing too fast” limited the debate to the alternatives such as use of solar energy and bio gas. It overlooked the issue of capacity and affordability of the alternatives on the part of the citizens. As highlighted in the story, 70% of Zimbabweans live in the rural areas and this is where most of the deforestation occurs. For these people to be able to utilise alternative sources like solar energy and bio gas, there is obviously need to invest in solar panels and building bio gas digesters of which the majority are too poor to afford that. The reporter should have asked the meteorologist, Barnabas Chipindu, how Zimbabwe would deal with the climate change issue if issues such as deforestation are not decisively addressed.

The story has largely limited the “remedy or prevention” issue to Zimbabwe yet the major contributors to pollution which culminates in adverse climatic conditions are the developed countries. It should be borne in mind that one country’s efforts to address the climate change would not achieve much until and unless the whole world decides to take drastic actions in addressing the climate change challenge. In other words, the reporter should have probed the scientist Chipindu and John Mupuro, a principal met officer at the Zimbabwe meteorological station to elaborate on what the international community has achieved through engagements like the Conference of Parties.



To simply state that the department is not fully funded to carry out activities like cloud seeding is just scant. The reporter should have interrogated why such an essential department is failing to get adequate funding. Perhaps the government does not fully appreciate the role played by the department in agricultural and other economic activities. Debate on an issue may be limited due to lack of sufficient information on a subject or through use of technical jargon. People need to know that issues under discussion are relevant to them and their daily lives. But that will not happen as long as journalism is cluttered with scientific jargon. Unpacking of technical jargon on any subject usually broadens the scope for debate and proffering of solutions where possible. The reporter should have asked the principal met officer to elaborate on cloud seeding so as to enable the reader to understand what it is and perhaps seek to contribute positively to the debate. Considering that this story is trying to set an agenda, it is important that the readers understand concepts and challenges and their involvement in the debate may transform a media agenda into a public agenda or vice versa. When the public and the media successfully keep an issue on the government's agenda, its salience improves, and the government may even make it its agenda as well and act to address an issue.

The failure by the reporter to ask the officials why Zimbabwe will be severely vulnerable between 2010 and 2030 and what it can do to ameliorate the severity reflects on the lack of the journalists' interviewing skills; she was supposed to probe. "According to Climate and Development Knowledge Network, Zimbabwe is severely vulnerable to climate change and its vulnerability is set to increase between 2010 and 2030 (DARA; Climate Vulnerability Monitor, 2012). The apparent display of indifference by the reporter on such frightening information leaves a lot to be desired. Engaging experts like the scientist and the principal met officer on whether Zimbabwe could do anything to avert the disaster or to lessen its impact, would obviously result in a beneficial debate. Needless to say, the unprofessionalism of the reporter or her ignorance of climate issues limited and stifled debate on an otherwise crucial issue of climate change and its impact on society and the economy.

The last story in this chapter looks at wetlands. The country's wetlands have been under siege from individuals who cultivate on wetlands or build homes, and corporates who construct buildings on wetlands. The violation of wetlands has continued unabated notwithstanding the

fact that there is a whole statutory entity in the form of the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) which has the mandate to ensure the sustainable utilisation of the environment. The story “Harare’s wetlands under threat” shows the damage done to the wetlands.

#### **4.7 “Harare’s wetlands under threat”**

##### **4.7 Words and symbols**

The story “Harare’s wetlands under threat” is defined and structured by the words and symbols which were selected by the journalist. The wetlands theme is topical in Zimbabwe; it has to do with development, pollution and housing. Since time immemorial, wetlands have played a critical role in human existence and the purification of water systems. Harare is said to have more than 30 wetlands, however, these wetlands are now under threat. The following words were deliberately chosen by the journalist of the story so as to give the desired meaning; wetlands, development, urban agriculture, pollution, aesthetic, environment, naturally purify water, drink contaminated water, rehabilitation, siltation, waste water management, reduce phosphorous content, pollution of underground water, monetary value, resuscitating wetlands and ecosystem.

##### **Preferred meanings**

The story “Harare’s wetlands under threat” gives a picture of an environment under siege from ordinary citizens, business, local and central governments. The fact that more than half of the capital is built on wetlands and that soon there could be nothing left as development, urban agriculture and pollution threaten their very existence is extremely worrying.

When one considers the statements which were issued by the experts, namely, University of Zimbabwe Professor Christopher Magadza and Ecosystems manager at the Environmental Management Agency (EMA), Debra Magwada, concerning environmental pollution of the wetlands; one is left querying the government’s seriousness about the country’s future. The story depicts statutory bodies charged with the responsibility of managing the environment

being emasculated by the same government which enacted the instruments such as Environmental Impact Assessment and Ecosystems Protection Regulations (S1) 7 of 2007. The story denotes a rampant disregard of the importance of wetlands by the government as evidenced by the allocation of other wetlands for developmental purposes around Harare, for example, the building of Longcheng Mall on the wetland adjacent to the National Sports Stadium.

Any news story is designed to have a particular meaning to the consumer of the text. Those who encode messages expect those who decode them to do so in a particular manner so as to produce certain results. Hall's model of the process of encoding and decoding cited in McQuail (2010) portrays any media text as a meaningful discourse. This is encoded according to the *meaning structure* of the mass media production organisation and its main supports, but decoded according to the different meaning structures and frameworks of knowledge of differently situated audiences. Therefore, the story "Harare's wetlands under threat" has certain values and ideology informing it. According to Goffman (1974) the essence of the preferred meaning is made through the use of framing tools such as selection of words, metaphors, exemplars, descriptions, arguments and visual images to deal with justifications, causes and consequences.

The framing of the story "Harare's wetlands under threat" depicting policy paralysis on the part of both local and central governments with regard to the ongoing destruction of wetlands overlooks the need to interrogate whether the same obtains in the rural areas. If there is a difference between the urban and the rural, it would be interesting to understand why. Perhaps, the story could have also made a comparison between Harare as the country's capital city and other cities and towns. The story might have overlooked the need to link some of the invasion of the wetlands to the country's contracting economy due to mismanagement. Furthermore, the story omitted to mention the politicisation of the land issue by the ruling ZANU PF party which has seen some people settling themselves illegally on the city's wetlands.

The story inadvertently skirts the issue of corruption which has given impetus to the destruction of wetlands in the capital city. It was important also to note the economic frame with regard to the Longcheng Mall which was built on a wetland. The government felt it made economic sense to allow the Chinese to construct their mall and do business instead of protecting the wetland. Furthermore, the story overlooked the need to state that Zimbabwe's political ties with China might have influenced Zimbabwe's authorities to violate the state of the wetland. A reporter, Mthulisi Mathuthu, states that the Long Cheng project was mired in controversy. The EMA tried to stop the project on grounds that it was situated on a wetland. Wetlands serve a variety of ecological services, including feeding downstream waters, trapping floodwaters, recharging groundwater supplies, removing pollution and providing fish and wildlife habitat. The environmental agency is said to have backed down from taking legal action against the Chinese due to political pressure, but not before fining the Harare City Council for the same offence.

Apparently, the portrayal of the challenges of destruction of wetlands in Harare may broaden the debate on why the central government, local government and EMA are not putting corrective measures in place to safeguard the wetlands. The story brings to the fore the negligence on the part of the central government concerning the invasion of the wetlands. The government's indifference to the destruction of wetlands even when it created an agency in the form of EMA to ensure that the environment is well managed serves to demonstrate that either the government is dysfunctional or EMA is just ineffective. In a subtle way, the story shows that the government of Zimbabwe is dismally failing to uphold the rule of law and this may be tantamount to accepting the violation of wetlands as natural or inevitable. Though the reporter did not clearly raise the aspect of corruption in the story but it lurks therein. The construction of buildings on wetlands is not sanctioned by EMA but might be the work of some corrupt officials who benefit financially from such irregular acts.

Furthermore, the story needed to interrogate and debunk the myth that some urban politicians violate wetlands in an endeavour to make ZimAsset work. If at all the assertion was correct, the wetlands could have been positively harnessed to purify water systems and this could have reduced expenses incurred in the purification of Harare's water.

As a nation we have not put monetary value on any of our wetlands, she said, adding: To a politician who wants to make ZimAsset work they will not make any considerations on building on wetlands.

By putting a value on them and indicating the loss value of depleting the area we may get somewhere, Magwada said.

*Daily News on Sunday, July 20, 2014*

Debate should have been widened to ask whose responsibility it is to put a price tag on the wetlands. It is also critical to know what would happen to the value suppose someone comes and has the capacity to buy off the wetland.

Magwada said for wetlands to be respected, government must put a price value on them to show just how much is being depleted by human activity.

She said in some countries like the United States, New York City bought their wetlands and have since valued them to be over \$1 billion, which they guard jealously.

*Daily News on Sunday, July 20, 2014*

Furthermore, the debate could have been broadened to include the possibility of rehabilitating a wetland after has been violated. This is necessary because the total disappearance of wetlands spells disaster not to only to Harare but to the whole country due to the fact that the capital city and other cities and towns are rapidly encroaching into formerly rural areas where there was still a semblance of order and respect for wetlands.

The discussion of the state of wetlands in Harare should have given the reporter the chance, that is, if she had knowledge of wetlands conservation through indigenous knowledge systems, to question the experts to explain how the bulk of wetlands in rural areas and some farming areas seem to be surviving the onslaught. It is in this context and at this juncture that one would expect the media to engage and interrogate the concept of indigenous knowledge systems with regards to environmental management.

The story limited debate by sticking to the familiar terrain of getting views from academics, scientists and officials whilst shunning the other voice of those who have co-existed with the

environment. The media's selection of these sources is hinged on their quest to get "endorsement" of a certain position. The framing of the story is designed to elicit a particular interpretation from a select group of media texts. Butler posits that this sense that the frame implicitly guides the interpretation has some resonance with the idea of the frame as a false accusation (Butler, 2009).

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

The thrust of this chapter was to analyse and interpret the agenda-setting and framing of the reportage of environmental news by the *Daily News on Sunday* (January to December 2014). The chapter also sought to identify, analyse and interpret news stories which conformed to the development media theory whereby grassroots endeavours and pursuits are covered by the media, at the same time giving them space and voice to articulate their hopes and aspirations with regard to development. Analysis and interpretation were based on stories which appeared in the newspapers. The stories were divided into four sections. The first section explored two stories representative of the impact of floods on the inhabitants of Chingwizi camp. In this section it was argued that the media lacked objectivity in some instances because the reporters would fail to probe for more information from government officials. Some were focusing on Zimbabwe's environmental issues like hardships endured by Chingwizi camp residents whose homes were swept away by the Tokwe-Mukorsi floods. The second section dealt with news to do with the killing of jumbos by poachers using cyanide, the culling of wildlife and the imminent extermination of Africa's elephants through poaching and the thriving of the illegal ivory trade. The third section focused on stories to do with how climate change discourse needs to involve the media. Another story in this section dealt with the rapid changes being witnessed in Zimbabwe's climate. It looked at how the changes impact on the livelihoods of citizens and the national economy. The fourth section was seized with analysing a story on the violation of the wetlands and the attendant problems. Some of the stories had a continental focus.

The stories were analysed with relation to the three media theories, namely, agenda-setting, framing and development media theory. It was apparent that the stories mostly fitted into the first two theories, that is, agenda-setting and framing. Stories falling into the framework of

the development media theory were very few. This is not unusual considering that the private are more concerned with news which sells, hence developmental news is only covered coincidentally. But the public media like *The Sunday Mail* have both a national and moral obligations to provide developmental news, for example, environmental news.

Stories in the first section have various frames, for example, blame frames and solution frames. As in the case of Chingwizi camp residents, there is total dejection on the part of the people, subsequently culminating in a blame frame; “Kudakwashe Bhasikiti, the Minister of State for Masvingo Province, said some of the villagers are being diagnosed with stress-related illnesses at the clinic. He said villagers were used to working in their fields but now there is nothing much to do”. It becomes a blame frame because it is government which evacuated the Tokwe-Mukorsi flood victims and put them into the Chingwizi camp, therefore, logic would dictate that it takes care of the people as they wait for proper resettlement.

The second section explored the theme of the reportage of environmental issues and the impact of chemicals on flora and fauna. There is agenda-setting in stories like the one in the *Daily News on Sunday* of March 30, 2014 (p.8) “How culling saves animals”. The reporter sets an agenda for the embracing of zoos and opposes the idea of sanctuaries or that of releasing animals into their natural habitats.

We cannot possibly release all of our animals back into a wild that is under siege, and which they would have to share with wild populations that are as large as their habitats can currently accommodate. Serious problems require serious responses. As yet, anti-zoo activists have put forward no serious alternatives; we would be interested to hear them, but we can’t afford to wait.

*Daily News on Sunday*, March 30, 2014 p.8

Analysis and interpretation of the papers were informed by categories, that is, words and symbols, preferred meanings, omission analysis and limiting debate. Words and symbols tend to give a slant to the story. The one who encodes the message has certain expectations, the reader should decode a text in a certain preferred way (preferred meaning). It is also crucial to note that in media, both the included and excluded carry certain meanings, values and

ideology. Therefore, the chapter was also seized with the task of trying to interrogate that which was omitted (excluded). Certain themes or narratives with regard to environmental reporting may be unprofessionally presented by the reporter, resulting in the limiting of the scope of debate.

The third section of the chapter focuses on stories on climate. It was argued in this section that whilst environmental reporting brings awareness, information and education on climate change, reporters lack proficiency in environmental reporting. For instance, the story “Zim’s climate changing too fast,” lacked completeness and objectivity. The reporter deliberately and perhaps unwittingly allowed ‘experts’ to proffer alternatives like solar energy and bio-gas to firewood without looking at affordability and capacity of the alternatives and that of the people respectively. Indigenous knowledge systems have since time immemorial provided ideas for sustainable utilisation of resources including energy sources. The failure by the reporter to probe further so that the ‘experts’ would also consider the economic dimension of the alternative which is economic or has financial implications, was a bit pedestrian.

The fourth section analysed the story “Harare’s wetland under threat” where it was highlighted that the importance of wetlands has been overlooked not only by individuals but by both the local and central governments. Individuals and corporate have been given a leeway to invade wetlands for residential or farming purposes. Even foreigners like the Chinese have been allowed to render the EMA ineffective by constructing a shopping mall on a wetland. Reporters failed to keep the wetlands agenda on the government’s agenda.

Although the reporters brought an awareness of how the environment is affected by several factors mostly caused by human beings, for example, climate change. The thrust of this chapter was to criticise the mode of environmental reporting. By and large, the reporters limited debate by choosing certain words which omitted the interrogation of critical issues, for instance, the breakdown of rule of law which might have caused the willy-nilly invasion of wetlands in Harare. As a result, in the stories, debate was limited to manifestations and consequences and not the causes of the problem. The themes of wetlands, siltation of Lake



Chivero, and poaching will be further pursued in chapter five which analyses how *The Financial Gazette* shows the reportage of the environment.

The following chapter focused on environmental reporting by *The Financial Gazette* for the period January 2014 to December 2014. Focus was on the analysis and interpretation of the stories as informed by the three media theories; agenda-setting, framing, and the media development theory.

## CHAPTER 5: Reportage of Environmental News by *The Financial Gazette*

### 5. Introduction

The previous chapter analysed stories on the plight of Tokwe-Mukorsi floods, use of chemicals in poaching, climate change, culling of game animals, and invasion of wetlands, which were published in the *Daily News on Sunday*. The chapter argued that environmental reporting by journalists highlighted critical environmental issues both at national and international levels. However, chapter four observed that in some instances the framing of environmental stories lacked objectivity and balance. This chapter endeavoured to present, analyse and interpret the coverage of environmental issues in *The Financial Gazette* which were published between January 2014 to December 2014. In order to have an understanding as well as appreciation of environmental reporting, the chapter applies three media theories which were identified to underpin the coverage of environmental issues by Zimbabwe's print media. The theories are; agenda-setting, development media theory, and framing. In addition, the propaganda model (PM) as coined by Herman and Chomsky (1998) contends that the agenda-setting media function as mechanisms of propaganda in several ways. The elite media can and work to determine what topics, issues and events are to be considered as 'newsworthy' by the lower-tier media and establish the general premises of official discourse. Furthermore, elite media favour a monocentric approach that seeks to limit and establish the range of debate and general boundaries for subsequent interpretation (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). The media determine, they select, they shape, they control, they restrict – in order to serve the interests of dominant, elite groups in the society (Chomsky, cited in Wintrock and Achbar, 1994).

According to McQuail (2010) the idea of a 'frame' in relation to news has been widely and loosely used in place of terms such as 'frame of reference', 'context,' 'theme,' or even 'news angle'. In a journalistic context, stories are given meaning by reference to some particular 'news value' that connects one event with other similar ones. However, the media may not have the monopoly of framing, as it were, there are other mediating factors which may afford other critics to question and/or dismiss certain news frames. Judith Butler avers that that the sense that the frame implicitly guides the interpretation has some resonance with the idea of the frame as a false accusation. But as we know from Trinh Minh-ha, it is possible to "frame

the frame” or, indeed, the “framer,” which involves exposing the ruse that produces the effect of individual guilt. The frame never quite determined precisely what it is we see, think, recognize, and apprehend. Something exceeds the frame that troubles our sense of reality; in other words, something occurs that does not conform to our established understanding of things (Butler, 2009). The view of how frame focuses on what is grievable and leave out what is considered ‘ungrievable’ suggests that news frames can be manipulated so as to mould readers’ perceptions or reading of media texts.

White (1978), a scholar of historiography brings in the idea that all discourse is not only constructed – a fact – that points to the subjective nature of the narrative’s arbitrariness of its meanings. It is often simplistically believed that the content of a newspaper may not be divorced from the ideology of the proprietor. In this argument, all what the owner or reporter of stories in a newspaper can know in advance all the potential meanings of their stories or ideological values underpinning the ideology of the paper. Fundamental to an understanding of media structure is the question of ownership and how the powers are exercised. McQuail posits that the belief that ownership ultimately determines the nature of media is not just a Marxist theory but virtually a common sense axiom. McQuail (2010) asserts that this belief is summed up in Altschull’s ‘a second law of journalism’ which states that ‘the contents of the media always reflect the interests of those who finance them’. Not surprisingly, there are several different forms of ownership of different media, and the powers of ownership can be exercised in different ways (McQuail, 2010). But, the reader-response theory and criticism maintains that the interpretive activities of readers, rather than the author’s intention or the text’s structure, explain a text’s significance and aesthetic value. In other words, the text’s indeterminate structures acquire a negative force, prodding readers to construct their own text and change their lives. Iser posits that in a paradoxical way, the indeterminate negativity of the literary text can move the reader not only to produce a coherent text but also to adopt positive values and redemptive beliefs.

It is also necessary to appreciate the fact that newspaper owners may not even be aware of all the dimensions of the meaning of the stories in his/her stable. Furthermore, since a word is a symbol or signifier in structuralist sense, a word is, therefore, a symbol that overflows with meanings not intended by the reporter or owner of newspaper. This is why readers can resist

preconceived readings intended by elites because ordinary readers bring their values or horizons of expectations. In other words, the argument advanced in this chapter is that although *The Financial Gazette*, is owned by Gideon Gono who is a ZANU PF member, this does not always reflect its content. Gono has allowed the paper to be run by professionals and in a professional way and the impact is that the environmental news published does not show the owner's political inclinations. In line with the theoretical pronouncements of the above critics, this chapter critically examines the reportage of environmental news by *The Financial Gazette*. The chapter is structured in a way that puts together similar themes that are representative of certain modes of representing or reporting the environment. The main sections are four, namely, wetlands; deforestation; poaching; and siltation.

### **5.1 Reportage of the theme of the threat to wetlands**

In the story below on the threat posed to wetlands “Wetlands under new threat” which was published in *The Financial Gazette* of January 16 – 22, 2014 (p. 9), attention is drawn to the menace threatening Harare's wetlands. The Marlborough vlei faces imminent disappearance.

### **5.1 Words and symbols**

The reporter of the story “Wetlands under threat” in *The Financial Gazette* of January 16-22, 2014 (p.9) selected certain words to employ so as to effectively portray the threat posed to wetlands. The words are; wetlands, disappear, illegal housing activities, Environmental Management Agency (EMA), stop farming activities, disturb the ecosystem, residential development, construction activities, controversial project, Harare Residents Trust (HRT), punish local authorities, waste disposal and management, water scarcity, capacity, conserve, grass species, remove pollution, replenish, protect the climate, capital of natural resources assets, cost, and essential services.

“Wetlands under threat” story paints a picture of a breakdown of rule of law where there is a total disregard of the importance of wetlands to the natural ecosystem. “The Marlborough vlei could soon disappear as more and more wetlands come under renewed threat of illegal housing activities”. It is apparent that there had been a respite on the attack of the

Marlborough wetland but there had been a rebound of late. The words which are used here show that there is a flip flop in terms of local both local and central governments because if at one time they had stopped the violation of the Marlborough vlei, they should not be seen to be condoning it again. The words also insinuate that the EMA has been reduced to a 'paper tiger' by the government because it is not capacitating it to effectively deal with the violation of the environment by illegal settlers and businesses building on wetlands. Harare residents have bemoaned the ineffectiveness of EMA in tackling environmental issues. "This week, the Harare Residents Trust (HRT), said while government has created EMA, the agency has not been given sufficient resources to conduct public awareness campaigns, and even monitoring the pollution and decimation of wetlands by big companies and housing cooperatives".

Considering the crucial role played by wetlands, it is apparent that their destruction could be a result of ignorance and insatiable greed on the part of some people and government's topsy-turvy priorities.

Healthy wetlands such as Monavale Vlei were said to be supporting 36 grass species and 86 plus other plants, as do similar intact wetlands in the Manyame/Marimba catchment area.

These grasses collectively, and naturally, remove pollution from run-off water, saving huge financial resources on operating waste water treatment works.

They replenish groundwater, contribute by transpiration to air moisture that result in rain; they also use up and store carbon dioxide to protect the climate.

*The Financial Gazette*, January 16-22, 2014 p.9

Furthermore, from the words employed in the story, it is apparent that the authorities are lacking financial foresight because the destruction of wetlands has huge financial implications to the fiscus. "The Trust said wetland destruction through cultivation and building eats into the capital of natural resources assets, thus resulting in a huge cost to Harare residents".

News reporting is a specialised area which operates within set parameters, for example, house style and editorial policy. The reporters are aware of the vision and mission of their organisations, and they consciously and 'professionally' discharge their duties in relation to values and ideology of their media houses. Even when reporters from different media stables

cover the same event, issue or topic; because of values and ideology, they may not employ the same words. They may not give prominence to the same personalities or have the same frame. Furthermore, the same story covered by journalists from different media houses, could have stories pertaining to different media theories; one may lean towards the agenda-setting, another one to framing, and another one to development media theory. The Unesco International Commission for the study of Communication Problems (McBride et al., 1980) clearly highlights the evolution and relevance of the development media theory to national development. McBride et al. posit that there is enough coherence in an alternative to other theories such as the libertarian or social responsibility, especially in view of the fact that communication needs of developing countries have tended in the past to be stated in terms of existing institutional arrangements. However, so much has changed both politically and in the field of communication since the promulgation of the New World Information and Communication Order by the MacBride Commission. The Global Media and Communication states that much has changed in the last quarter of a century, with the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union: the Third World as it was known then ceased to exist; the Non-Aligned Movement (which gave political clout to the NWICO) is little more than a periodic talking shop. Furthermore, the gradual integration of China into the global economy has changed the power equation, and above all, under the powerful free-market ideology, liberalization, deregulation and privatisation of the media and communication have accelerated at an unprecedented level and across continents. According to the Global Media and Communication 1 (3) one of the most areas most profoundly affected by marketisation is telecommunication, where the global South has made remarkable progress in the past decade.

These changes are also reflected in the way information and communication issues are framed and debates in international forums. The fact that the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) was organised under the auspices of the International Telecommunication Union and not UNESCO demonstrates the shift from a largely political to a predominantly technological focus. Unlike NWICO, though, the WSIS process has included a sizeable input from civil society (although here again the preponderance of the Western-based non-governmental organisations seems to reinforce the dominant paradigms). (Global Media and Communication 1 (3)). What this entails is that there is really need to redefine the development media theory as it was cast in the MacBride Commission vis-à-vis

the obtaining political and communication contexts. This will definitely inform how the journalists approach environmental reporting.

This is done with an especial emphasis on the positive role of commercial media to stimulate development or on media campaigns to stimulate economic change in the direction of the model of the industrial society. The normative elements of emerging development theory are especially opposed to dependency and foreign domination and to arbitrary authoritarianism. They are for the positive uses of the media in national development, for the autonomy and cultural identity of the particular national society (McQuail, 2005). It is in this context that one would expect the media to report environmental news in a way which gives an equal footing to indigenous knowledge systems with the western methods of environmental management.

### **Preferred meanings**

“Wetlands under new threat” story is written in such a manner that the reader is prodded to question on the seriousness of both the City of Harare and the central government in protecting the environment from destruction. One is made to believe that the authorities are complicit in the decimation of wetlands. The element of corruption creeps in, more so when big companies, with the blessing of the government, build on wetlands, for example, the Longcheng Mall close to the National Sports Stadium in Belvedere, notwithstanding the protests of EMA.

Last December, a Chinese-run shopping centre opened its doors to the public following the finalisation of the controversial project that sits on another wetland in the Belvedere area close to the National Sports Stadium. Down the road from the same shopping centre, a service station was also constructed on the wetland near Mukuvisi River.

*The Financial Gazette*, January 16-22, 2014 p.9

The building of the service station would give one the impression that the authorities are hell bent on destroying the wetlands even though the agency they created through an act of parliament has been advising them to assist in conserving the wetlands due to their importance to the ecosystem. Furthermore, the preferred meaning is that there are people who

are above the law since those who are building and farming on wetlands illegally are not being brought to book by the law enforcement agents.

Two months ago, the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) held a meeting with Marlborough residents and gave them an ultimatum to stop farming activities in the area in order not to disturb the ecosystem.

However, that same area has since been pegged for residential development.

Indications are that the stands being earmarked for are for employees of one of the government's agencies.

*The Financial Gazette*, January 16-22, 2014 p.9

EMA is a government entity which under normal circumstances should be consulted by all government departments on all issues related to the protection of the environment. The story carries innuendos to the effect that there is impunity which pervades government systems to such an extent that there is paralysis in the functioning of quasi-government bodies such as EMA. The reporter, furthermore, raises the issue of lack of focus, though stealthily, on the part of EMA. It appears it emphasizes punishment of local authorities on waste disposal, yet ignoring other important areas like capacitating them to effectively deal with waste management.

The enforcement attitude of EMA has been largely to punish local authorities on issues of waste disposal and management, but have not have not invested in building the capacity of local authorities to deal with this menace of poor waste management, said HRT.

*The Financial Gazette*, January 16-22, 2014 p.9

The news story gives an impression that the fight to conserve Harare's wetlands is already a lost battle because EMA has failed to get support from the government. Stanley Fish abandoned the assumption that competent readers discover one "deep structure" or normative intention because that assumption did not enable him to explain why some readers interpret a text in one way and others interpret it another. He also rejects the belief that aesthetic theory ensures a reader's self-consciousness, governs interpretive practice, or changes anything at all. He admits that theorists may examine the rhetorical figures of a text, the unifying intention of its author, its play of gender differences, or its critiques of ideology; however, he considers these interpretive practices a matter of local, Derridean, authorial, feminist, or



Marxist beliefs, not of valid theory, since general rules or universal norms cannot determine correct interpretations (“Consequences” 433-38; see also Knapp and Michaels 738-40).

News stories usually spun ambiguity, the desire is that the reader or audience should decode the texts as intended by the encoder. Chinelo and Macpherson (2015) postulate that ambiguity in language entails the susceptibility of an expression to double or multiple interpretations. Ambiguity may undermine the information-conveying efficacy of a linguistic message. It may task the comprehension faculties of the reader leaving him torn between double or multiple possible interpretations as he labours to construct meanings and messages from the texts. Thus, ambiguity unarguably poses a barrier to effective communication which demands that both the writer and the reader recognize the same meaning for each linguistic construction. Environmental news stories published in *The Financial Gazette* has a business/financial flair or inclination because the paper’s target market are business executives. As they read environmental news, they are expected to relate it to business issues. It has been observed that because of stories’ preferred meanings, environmental news like HIV/AIDS news/information in the early 1980’s has tended to be alarmist. Most climate change framings in most cases focus on the impacts and consequences, due to the fact that climate change is always discussed in the context of risks, disasters, tones of sufferings, doom and gloom. The key undoing with most of the media is that they always frame climate change or other environmental issues, for example, the violation of wetlands in sensational and alarming ways, which scare rather than engage, inform or educate.

### **Omission analysis**

For any agenda-setting or framing to work effectively and efficiently, the media will have to deliberately include and/or exclude certain information. It is a truism in media *lingua* that which is excluded may be equally if not more important than that which is included. The story “Wetlands under new threat” does not elaborate on who is sanctioning the invasion of wetlands by those who are building houses and businesses. The reporter makes an assumption that the readers are aware of the politics pertaining to the violation of the wetlands. One would expect the story to elaborate why the illegal settlers resumed pegging stands on the

Marlborough vlei after they had apparently complied with EMA's directive issued two months earlier.

Two months ago, the Environment Management (EMA) held a meeting with Marlborough residents and gave them an ultimatum to stop farming activities in the area in order not to disturb the ecosystem.

However, that same area has since been pegged for residential development.

Indications are that the stands being earmarked for development are for employees of one of the government's agencies.

*The Financial Gazette*, January 16-22, 2014 p.9

The story does not question why wetlands are being targeted now by individuals, businesses and government agencies. This omission on its own, inadvertently tries to normalise the abnormal, that is, the destruction of wetlands which play a critical role in maintaining a sound ecosystem.

Considering that EMA seems to be fighting a lone battle with regard to the conservation of wetlands, the reporter conveniently avoided highlighting the issue of politics as the major cause. There is an inference in the story that there are powers behind the invasion of wetlands who might be more powerful than EMA. Furthermore, the story omits to inform the reader that the city of Harare is already experiencing water scarcity. "Projections by environmentalists indicate that there would be water scarcity in Zimbabwe by 2025 as a result of the destruction and mismanagement of ecosystems such as wetlands". The exclusion or omission of some information or words is not a fortuitous incident; it is deliberate and planned. Both Lukacs and Goldmann in Eagleton (1976) inherit from Hegel a belief that the literary work should form a unified totality; and in this they are close to a conventional position in non-Marxist criticism. Lukacs sees the work as a *constructed* totality rather than a natural organism; yet a vein of 'organistic' thinking about the art object runs through much of his criticism. It is one of the several scandalous propositions which Pierre Macherey throws out to bourgeois and neo-Hegelian criticism alike that he rejects this belief. For Macherey, a work is tied to ideology not so much by what it says as by what it does not say. It is in the significant silences of a text, in its gaps and absences, that the presence of ideology can be most positively felt. It is these *silences* which the critic must make 'speak'.

However, the very act of intending to limit debate on the threat to wetlands ironically draws the reader's attention to what should be included. In that way, what was meant to limit actually ends up expanding the debate. "Wetlands under new threat" story sought to confine debate to the fight against wetlands invasions without interrogating other factors such as economic, corruption, breakdown of rule of law, and class. It is important to critique this story since there are undertones which can help understand why the destruction of the environment has gone on unabated in Zimbabwe despite the government having set up an entity to oversee the conservation of the environment, that is, EMA. It could have added value to the story if the reporter had questioned the invasion of the wetlands as a new phenomenon, because if it had been the trend since centuries ago, the current generation would not have seen a single wetland both in the urban and rural areas. The reporter could have broadened the debate to include economic factors. Due to the contracting of Zimbabwe's economy, many have lost jobs and they can no longer afford to pay rentals, hence some of them have been invading open spaces to build their own shelters. But in a normal working governing system, one would expect either the local or central government to move in and restore order. What is obtaining points to a dysfunctional government system where even its own entities like EMA can be rebuffed by offenders with impunity. However, the reporter gave space for the reader to independently analyse the environmental situation obtaining in the country (as provided by the story), and then come up with his/her own interpretation, thus democratising the decoding of environmental news texts.

It is also apparent that the destruction of the environment has an attendant element of corruption. *The Financial Gazette* is not a newspaper which is hesitant to publish cases of corruption, then one wonders why the reporter avoided raising the issue of corruption in the story of the destruction of wetlands. The scope of debate could have been broadened by interrogating how business entities like Longcheng could be allowed by the government to construct a shopping mall on a wetland in Belvedere even though EMA had raised a red flag. It is on record that the then Minister of Tourism, Walter Mzembi argued that the government could not deny the Chinese company the right to build a shopping centre that would create jobs for the citizens, just because EMA wanted to protect four frogs. There could be no worse affront to a government parastatal like EMA as this. Needless to say, this smacks of underhand dealings between some government officials and the Chinese.

This week, the Harare Residents Trust (HRT), said while government has created EMA, the agency has not been given sufficient resources to conduct public awareness campaigns, and even monitoring the pollution and decimation of wetlands by big companies and housing cooperatives.

*The Financial Gazette*, January 16-22, 2014 p.9

Debate was limited to the invasion of wetlands and the ineffectiveness of EMA to stem the tide. However, the reporter could have also looked at the issue of class. Marlborough and Emerald Hill suburbs are for the middle class who under normal circumstances are expected to be well informed and educated about the importance of the environment. Hence, the reporter should in his story “Wetlands under new threat” have elaborated on the class of people who were invading the wetlands. The middle class is generally expected to have the citizenship mentality (caring for the environment for the current generation and posterity), whereas the lower class has the soldier mentality (doing as directed, wanting to derive benefits now). In view of this, the identity of the invaders of the Marlborough vlei and Ashbrittle wetland in Emerald Hill would have helped enhance the debate on the destruction of the wetlands.

The blame frame was not adequate; the reporter should have adopted a solution frame which could assist both citizens and authorities to care for the environment so as to protect it from climate change challenges. Chari (2013) contends that while some accuse the media of propagating reform ‘distortions’ and ‘misconceptions’ about the land reform programme (Stone, 2007; Taylor 2007; Chari 2010; Elich 2011), others charge the media of ‘less comprehensible’ coverage, resulting in the propagation of ‘myths’ rather than reality (Scoones and Mavedzenge, 2010).

The first story to be analysed in section two of this chapter is “Timber industry in doldrums”. The story is about the imminent collapse of the timber industry due to illegal invasions of timber plantations by settlers, as well as lack of foresight on the part of plantation owners, that is, the reforestation plan. The reporter deploys words and symbols to convey a sense of wanton destruction of natural resources by people who enjoy some degree of impunity.

## **5.2 Timber industry in doldrums**

### **5.2 Words and symbols**

The story “Timber industry in doldrums” has words which predominate and define the discourse. The journalist employed words and phrases such as timber plantation reserves, collapse, vibrant, illegal settlements, mismanagement, ineffective timber replacement exercise, ill-performance, folded, downsized, in limbo, fast-track land reform programme, output, import, illegal settlers, timber forests, estates, dire straits, employer, and discovery of diamonds. They all have to do with forests and the attendant challenges of extinction of the forests, particularly in Manicaland Province. The story “Timber industry in doldrums” is written in a way which is meant to set an agenda for those in the timber industry and the government. Fornkwa (2015) postulates that newspapers are noted for using particular patterns of language in their discourse to mediate various ideologies, especially when writing on topical issues. This is contrary to their occupational norms which entail “reporting something called ‘news’ without commenting on it, or shaping its formulation in any way” Schudson (2001).

### **Preferred meanings**

McQuail states that it is true that communicators choose to encode messages for ideological and institutional purposes and to manipulate language and media for those ends (media messages are given a ‘preferred reading’, or what might now be called ‘spin’). Secondly, receivers (‘decoders’) are not obliged to accept messages as sent but can and do resist ideological influence by applying variant or oppositional readings, according to their own experience and outlook.

The story “Timber industry in doldrums” denotes a self-inflicted problem brought about by the government’s haphazard fast-track land reform programme. This is implied in the statement, “The collapse of the once vibrant industry has been attributed to various factors, from illegal settlements, mismanagement to an ineffective timber replanting exercise”. Apart from the illegal settlements, the story infers that those charged with the responsibility of sustainably conserving the forests were incompetent. Furthermore, the story avers that had

there been an effective replanting exercise, the timber industry could have maintained its vibrancy. The framing of the story highlights the negative impact caused to the country's industries which relied on the timber sector. Some companies folded and others downsized. What is apparent is that the livelihoods of many people were negatively affected due to the ill-performance of the timber industry.

Timber used to be the biggest employer in Manicaland both in terms of direct employment and through downstream industries such as transport. It employed 10 000 people directly and 40 000 indirectly. But this is not the case now,' said Matangaidze.

*The Financial Gazette*, February 6-12, 2014 p.C3

This is further buttressed by the statement on the drop on export earnings and how it has affected employment. "Export earnings dropped by 68 percent, from US\$34,9 million in 2005 to US\$11,3 million in 2012, while employment in the industry fell by 43 percent over the comparable period to less than 8, 000 workers, from 14, 253 in 2005. Journalists use statistics as a way of proving a point or substantiating particular facts. Statistics are applied, at times to enlighten the public or to hoodwink the public. Best (2001) identifies 'number laundering' as a key feature of media reporting of statistics. Here, a number appearing in one news report becomes a source for everyone interested in the social problem it describes: "Its origins as someone's best guess are now forgotten and, through repetition, it comes to be treated as a straightforward fact" (2001). The story further implies that those in charge of the timber industry are powerless and hapless in the face of illegal settlements. Apparently, the illegal settlers seem to have the backing of powerful forces so much that those in charge of the forests can simply watch as the once vibrant timber industry deteriorates. There are connotations of impunity, corruption, entitlement, political patronage, breakdown of law and order, and lack of respect for property rights.

We have been battling against the illegal settlers whose presence in various estates threatens the existence of the timber industry. If the illegal settlements remain, we stand to lose our timber forests. If the whole issue is not addressed in next few years, there will be no timber industry to talk of in Zimbabwe, said Kanyekanye, adding that other timber producers were facing the same challenges'.

*The Financial Gazette*, February 6-12, 2014 p.C3

The story infers that the government is not keen to create employment for its people since it is allowing existing companies to die under its nose. Kanyekanye highlights that the challenges of illegal settlements are not confined to Manicaland province but are also affecting other provinces. The reader could then question the government's priorities and vision in terms of economic development. Chari (2013) posits that framing influences how people think about issues by invoking certain interpretations of information. The way in which news is packaged, the amount of exposure or placement given to an issue and the overall accompanying headline and visual effects, engender certain ways of interpreting reality.

### **Expanding debate**

The story "Timber industry in doldrums" raised some critical issues such as unemployment and loss of export earnings as a result of the depletion of the forests. This depletion is caused by illegal settlements inter alia. The journalist expanded debate by highlighting the causes and consequences of the rampant destruction of forests by illegal settlers. Perhaps, what the reporter could have also done was to take responsible ministers to task; the reporter inadvertently lets the authorities go scot-free and this undermines any efforts to mend the national economy. Ministers of Environment, and Commerce and Industry should have been taken to task; the 'BBC *Hard Talk*' way. The story exposes the inaction of the government on remedying the bad situation. Timber industry officials are simply whining without any effective solution being conceived.

We have been battling against the illegal settlers whose presence in various estates threatens the existence of the timber industry. If the illegal settlements remain, we stand to lose our timber forests. If the whole issue is not addressed in next few years, there will be no timber industry to talk of in Zimbabwe, said Kanyekanye, adding that other timber producers were facing the same challenges.

*The Financial Gazette*, February 6-12, 2014

Timber used to be the biggest employer in Manicaland both in terms of direct employment and through downstream industries such as transport. It employed 10 000 people directly and 40 000 indirectly. But this is not the case now, said Matangaidze.

What seems to weaken the story in the context of a solution frame is that the reporter did not question both Kanyekanye and Matangaidze why the timber industry challenges have continued unaddressed when they pose dire consequences to the national economy. The story should have informed the reader whether the officials were proactive or reactionary in addressing the threat to the timber industry occasioned by illegal settlements. The way the reporter confined the debate may be attributed to the conflict of ownership and political affiliation. Even though the proprietor of *The Financial Gazette*, Gideon Gono has been said to be an owner who leaves the running of the paper to professionals, considering the way the paper's reporters tackle issues to do with the environment and illegal settlements; one is tempted to daresay that there could be an unwritten policy of avoiding hard-hitting on the land issue. The reporter of the story could have broadened the scope of the debate to highlight possible political repercussions which could emanate from high levels of unemployment caused by the folding of companies as well as downsizing of the workforce.

“Mutare businessman, Kenneth Saruchera, said the timber industry continued to suffer as it has been overshadowed by the discovery of diamonds in Manicaland”. From this assertion, one gets the impression that the diamond industry had actually transformed the fortunes of the people of Manicaland. It would appear as if the diamond industry had created employment for a number which surpasses that which the timber industry had created over the years. The reporter could have widened the scope of debate by engaging the businessman to provide statistics on the jobs the diamond industry had created ever since the discovery of the diamonds. It would also have made sense had the journalist asked the businessman how much revenue had the diamonds contributed to the fiscus. Parenti argues that the most effective propaganda term is that which relies on framing rather than on falsehood. By bending it, rather than breaking it, using emphasis, nuance, innuendo and peripheral embellishments, communicators create a desired impression without resorting to explicit advocacy and without departing too far from appearance of objectivity (Parenti, 1993). A platform should have been created by the story “Timber industry in doldrums” by questioning government authorities why illegal settlements have been allowed to sprout in the timber forests and jeopardising the future of a once vibrant industry. The mediocrity and timidity of the journalist limited debate to the status quo without interrogating possible remedies to the deterioration of the timber industry.



The second story in the second section of this chapter is “Tree species under threat”. It highlights how certain tree species are disappearing due to human activities.

### **5.3 Tree species under threat**

#### **5.3 Words and symbols**

In selecting and employing particular words and/or symbols in a story, reporters will be trying to structure news in a certain way so as to achieve a defined objective. Social scientists who study the news speak of ‘constructing news’, of ‘making news’, of the ‘social construction of reality’. ‘News is what newspapermen make it’, according to one study (Gieber, 1964). ‘News is the result of the methods newswriters employ’, according to another (Fishman, 1980: 14). News is ‘manufactured by journalists’ (Cohen and Young, 1973).

Predominant in this story are words and phrases such as; tree species, threat, over-harvesting, risk of extinction, firewood, prioritise the forestry sector, bio security threat, tourism, climate change, illegal forests occupation, indigenous and exotic plantations, inadequate funding, limited information, limited participation of local communities in forestry management, invasive alien species, wildlife, small-scale tobacco farmers, and land for woodlots.

#### **Preferred meanings**

The reporter of the story “Tree species under threat” sets the agenda for the authorities to expeditiously and decisively take action to save trees from any further destruction. This is done by highlighting the importance of the tree species and what specialists like ecologists have observed with regard to the destruction of the trees. The story infers that this destruction has proceeded unchecked because authorities are indifferent to the conservation of the tree species.

A number of tree species are under threat in Zimbabwe due to a combination of factors, among them over-harvesting of the country’s forests.

The Murara tree, which has some medicinal properties, is among the tree species at the risk of extinction.

*The Financial Gazette*, June 26 –July 2, 2014 p.3

It is apparent that the story wants to drive home the point that the media are not simply being sensational or alarmist with regard to the destruction of critical natural resources. The journalist through the story seeks to engage both the authorities and citizens to take the issue of conservation seriously since they both derive immense benefits from the forests.

There is now need to prioritise the forestry sector just as other sectors like tourism. In fact, tourism cannot survive without forests. On the other hand, there is huge debate on climate change. I believe it wholly centres on forests. The more we are destroying, the drier it becomes.

*The Financial Gazette*, June 26-July 2, 2014 p.3

Furthermore, the story “Tree species under threat” seeks to show to all and sundry that the destruction of forests might be as a result of breakdown of law and order in the country. If there was effective enforcement of law, the forests would not be destroyed through illegal settlements. To a certain extent, the story infers that those who planted and nurtured the trees over the decades were more responsible than the current crop of authorities and citizens.

Illegal forests occupation in both indigenous and exotic plantations, inadequate funding of the sector, veldt fires, limited information on the forestry resources, limited participation of local communities in forest management, communal land tenure system and the issue of invasive alien species (pests) are some of the challenges facing Zimbabwe’s forestry sector.

*The Financial Gazette*, June 26-July 2, 2014 p.3

Zezeza (2006) posits that since colonialism set foot in Africa and until the present day, all systems of knowledge production, dissemination and consumption reflect robust Western hegemony. Indeed, the hegemony of what was previously colonial and now Western knowledge systems is entrenching itself deep in Africa with all the ravages of the contemporary knowledge imperialism and the capitalist globalisation. In this regard, Zezeza confirms the dominance of the Western hegemony in post-colonial Africa (in his own words):

*“it is everywhere ...., dominating the disciplinary and interdisciplinary discourses and departments, paradigms and publications, academic politics and practices”* (Zezeza, 2006).

Probably, environmental reporters could broaden the environmental news discourse by deliberately getting news from various sources, for example, rural communities. In the news stories on the environment, there is a preoccupation of getting opinions from government officials, professionals and personnel from agencies or organisations like EMA. The silence on other sources of information like communities who have interacted with the natural environment since time immemorial could be because of the ‘de-scientification’ of indigenous knowledge systems. Environmental reporters seem to push ‘unscientific knowledge’ to a lower rung on the news ladder terms of knowledge which can be ‘professionally’ utilised in environmental management. Palys (1997) distinguishes science as an epistemology separate from lay-knowledge, stating that there are four characteristics that separate scientific knowledge from everyday or lay-knowledge. In general, scientific approaches have been described as being systematic, subject to peer and public review, part of a collective process, and self-reflexive. This positivistic-reductionist or positivistic-rationalist approach includes a common method of observation, hypothetico-deductive reasoning, verification by experimentation or other forms of testing, for example, computer simulation, and replication. On the other hand, lay-knowledge is generally based on one or two observed phenomena, or on sparse and unsystematic data (Palys, 1997). There is more controversy which will surround the utilisation of local communities’ knowledge in environmental conservation in “mainstream” society to complement western science, if perceived and real differences between the two systems continue to be stressed instead of similarities.

A plethora of challenges listed in the foregoing paragraph serves to say that there is need for the government to galvanise its entities like the Forestry Commission into action to protect the environment. Implied in the story is that another reason why forests are under attack is that local communities have not been brought on board in the conservation of the forests. The media could effectively engage local communities in environmental management if the media decided to employ the development media theory whose tenets have to do with the involvement of the grassroots in the formulation, development and implementation of projects. Inasmuch as the story gives the impression that the situation is dire, it simultaneously commends the country for having performed better than other countries in the region in as far as forests conservation is concerned. “Zimbabwe forests are in relatively good

shape, compared to some other countries in the region like Zambia, for example, where many forests were lost to charcoal production”.

In setting the agenda, the writer of the story emphasizes the importance of the forests to the national economy; hence there is an urgent need for the government to ensure that this critical resource is protected from destruction.

### **Omission analysis**

The story “Tree species under threat” highlights the imminent extinction of the Murara tree which is said to have medicinal properties. What is not explained is whether the tree is being harvested because of its medicinal properties or is being used for firewood or other purposes. It could be that some people who are aware of the tree’s properties might be cutting and replanting it in their regions. “Malvern Mushongahande, a forest entomologist and research co-ordinator at the Forestry Commission, said the Murara tree has not been sighted in areas where it used to be”. One of the values of journalism is completeness, but the story fails to elaborate on the issue of pests. The reader would want to know whether the Forestry Commission is doing anything to address the issue. “Research has also shown that pests from as far afield as Australia have put some of the tree species under bio security threat”. Leaving it like that gives one the impression that the Forestry Commission has no capacity to deal with the issue, or is just uninterested. Assuming that that is the position, it spells doom for the country’s forests. Furthermore, the reporter of the story fails to explain the position of the government and the Forestry Commission with regard to the invasion of both indigenous and exotic forests. The journalist is short-changing by not explaining why such illegal activities have been allowed to continue unchecked by the government. What is apparent is that the powers-that-be could be complicit to the commission of such nefarious activities which are detrimental to economic development and the maintaining of an ideal climate in the face of global climate change. Readers would expect journalists to name and shame individuals who violate nature. Problems without readily available and feasible solutions may fail to get on the decision agendas of governmental actors even if they attract public and governmental attention.

In agenda-setting just as in framing, certain angles and information are deliberately included or excluded so that a story promotes a certain idea or perspective which the readers or audiences should accept and/or adopt. Maxwell McCombs (2004) asserts that newspapers provide a host of cues about the salience of the topics in the daily news – lead story on page one, other front page display, large headlines, etc. Walter Lippmann in his 1922 classic, *Public Opinion*, postulates that the news media are a primary source of those pictures in our heads about the larger world of public affairs, a world that for most citizens is “out of reach, out of sight, out of mind.” What we know about the world is largely based on what the media decide to tell us. More specifically, the result of this mediated view of the world is that the priorities of the media strongly influence the priorities of the public. Elements prominent on the media agenda become prominent in the public mind.

Whilst this portrayal limits debate on the state of tree species, that is, their imminent decimation, the story creates a platform where those in the sector of conservation, the government and communities may engage to proffer solutions to the crisis. The publication of the story, will obviously nudge responsible authorities to comment or to institute corrective measures. In as much as the story “Tree species under threat” touched on several pertinent issues such as the risk of the disappearance of some tree species, climate change, pests and illegal forests occupation, it fell short of proffering solutions. In agenda-setting it is crucial to suggest a solution if at all an issue is to remain on the government agenda. The story does not explain why the forestry sector has been neglected whilst tourism was flourishing.

There is now need to prioritise the forestry sector just as other sectors like tourism. In fact, tourism cannot survive without forests. On the other hand, there is huge debate on climate change. I believe it wholly centres on forests. The more we are destroying, the drier it becomes.

*The Financial Gazette*, June 26-July 2, 2014 p.3

Debate could have been broadened to emphasise the importance of forests to tourism. The monetary value of tourism and forests to the national economy should be quantified so that the government and relevant entities like the Forestry Commission are galvanised to take actions which guarantee the preservation of forests. One would be curious what is being prioritised currently, besides tourism, whilst forest conservation is being neglected. Furthermore, the debate should have brought to the fore the critical role played by forests in maintaining a sound environment. The statement, “The more we are destroying, the drier it

becomes”, needed further elaboration so as to conceptualise the critical issue of climate change.

*The Financial Gazette* fails to develop and broaden the scope of debate with regard to the illegal occupation of both indigenous and exotic forests. Debate could have questioned why people are being allowed to invade forests which are critical for tourism and the climate. Suffice it to say that the illegal occupation of forests is an indictment on the government of Zimbabwe. It is as plain as a pikestaff that there is a serious problem in as far as governance and rule of law are concerned. If at all there was need for resettling the people, the government could have identified some suitable area where important natural resources like forests would not be destroyed.

Illegal forests occupation in both indigenous and exotic plantations, inadequate funding of the sector, veldt fires, limited information on the forestry resources, limited participation of local communities in forest management, communal land tenure system and the issue of invasive alien species (pests) are some of the challenges facing Zimbabwe’s forestry sector.

*The Financial Gazette*, June 26-July 2, 2014 p.3

The scope of the debate could have been broadened by trying to locate the probable space which local communities could occupy in environmental management. Considering that local communities since time immemorial have always cared for the environment; the reporter should have endeavoured to explain how, why and when they were side-lined and by who. The story could have also widened the scope of debate by suggesting the communities’ entry points into the area of environmental management; that is, employing so-called conventional methods or indigenous knowledge systems. Such an angle could have interrogated the viability of the indigenous knowledge systems in both environmental management and environmental reporting.

The story could have also juxtaposed the probable benefits accruing from the sale of tobacco and the long term benefits derived from well managed forests. This is necessary because there is a subtle conspiracy on the part of authorities to turn a blind eye on the destruction of forests by small-scale tobacco farmers who use firewood to cure the leaf. Since the advent of the land reform, the numbers of small-scale tobacco farmers have swelled but there has not

been a concurrent development of energy sources for the curing of the leaves. It could have helped the debate if the story had highlighted other available energy sources which small-scale tobacco farmers could use whilst they await the maturing of the woodlots.

The Forestry Commission is now legally requiring all tobacco farmers to set aside land for woodlots in the hope of reversing the damage to the country's natural forests. The country's forest resources cover approximately 66 percent of the total land area.

*The Financial Gazette*, June 26-July 2, 2014 p.3

What is glaringly missing in the debate is the existence of a deliberate policy on the part of the government to effectively manage the forests resources which doubtlessly have economic (tourism, timber exports and employment) as well as social (health and climate) benefits. The story does not prod the authorities to halt the illegal forests occupation which have culminated in unprecedented destruction of the environment. The newspaper as the public sphere is expected to enlarge the space for debate instead of limiting it. McQuail (2010) posits that the media ought to circulate information and ideas as a basis for public opinion since citizens largely depend on the media for information as a basis for mobilisation. When the media wittingly or unwittingly avoids confronting authorities to explain or address critical issues such as the illegal invasion of forests, they would be doing injustice to the readers and the nation at large. In opening avenues for debate on national matters, the media would be interconnecting citizens and government, and possibly galvanise both to engage and conceive solutions to national challenges. Furthermore, for the environmental news to remain 'alive' and topical the media ought to be abreast with changes in the discourse and strive to reframe the stories or agenda. Chyi and McCombs (2004) posit that during any news event's life span, the news media often reframe the event by emphasizing different attributes of the event – consciously or unconsciously – in order to keep the story alive and fresh. This journalistic practice – referred to as “frame-changing” is a dynamic process over time.

The following third section explores stories focused on animal poaching. There are three stories on poaching which show how the government seems to be losing the battle against poachers. However, this section will only analyse two stories. The first story in this section which was analysed is “Tracking the presidential herd”.

## 5.4 Tracking the presidential herd

### 5.4 Words and symbols

According to Danesi (2002) words in general are symbolic signs, as are many hand gestures. These symbolic signs play important roles in the building of meaning in a news story, be it hard or soft news. The reporter employed words such as; the cradle of centuries old vibrant ecosystem, a must-visit spot for nature lovers, raid, herbivores, one of southern Africa's most arid regions, food and water are scarce, vegetarians, predicament, carcasses, pack of lions, colony of hyenas, invaded, feast on the loot, the lion's famed 'king of the jungle' status, presidential herd, valleys, leafless twigs, dry grasses, sun-baked soils, wildlife, royalty, habituate, anointed, special status, endanger, friendliness, unique tourism, decreed, hunted or culled, and "symbolise Zimbabwe's commitment to responsible wildlife management".

### Preferred meanings

Herman and Chomsky contend that preferred meanings are structured into news discourse as a result of official sources that are identified as 'experts'. In this way, news discourse 'may be skewed in the direction desired by the government and "the market"' (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). Concurrently, the 'preferred' meanings that are structured into news discourse are typically 'those that are functional for elites'. Therefore, news is structured in a way that it meets the socio-economic interests of the dominant class. *The Financial Gazette*, being a business newspaper, it structures its news so as to satisfy its target audience; the business executives.

The environmental frame of the story "Tracking the presidential herd" infers that with enough political will, it is perfectly possible to save wildlife from extinction.

But their friendliness was to later endanger them as poachers pounced on them, forcing Elliot to lobby President Mugabe to grant them special status. Zimbabwe's presidential elephant herd was indeed anointed when President Mugabe in that same year decreed these habituated elephants that roam the Hwange estate should never be hunted or culled; rather that they should "symbolise Zimbabwe's commitment to responsible wildlife management," adds Miombo on its website.

*The Financial Gazette*, January 23-29, 2014 p.C4



The story infers that the area of Hwange National Park has always been home to wildlife prior to its transformation into a national park. This means that earlier human generations had a sound co-existence with wildlife. The conservation of this environment by earlier generations of human beings had resulted in the existence of an excellent tourist resort area; the Hwange National Park. “Waves of dust spiralled into the air in the distance as we embarked on an early morning game drive in Hwange National Park – the cradle of a centuries old vibrant eco-system that has evolved into a must-visit spot for nature lovers”. What also comes out clearly from the story is that the president is someone who is so much concerned about the environment. After having been informed about the imminent decimation of the jumbo population, he responded expeditiously. ““Given they and their family members had been virtually wiped out by hunters, the few remaining elephants naturally had become extremely skittish, acutely focused and wary of any human presence,” says the website of a safari operator, Miombo Safaris””.

The story also denotes that apart from the poaching, wild animals are exposed to the vagaries of cruel nature and this poses great danger to their existence. Water and food are scarce in this semi-arid region.

It was the start of an exploration that would take us across rolling plains, to track a rare lone rhino facing near extinction in this part of the world, and to man-made water pools where we played witness to a blazing tug-of-war for carcasses.

*The Financial Gazette*, January 23-29, 2014 p.C4

Furthermore, there is an inference that all hope is not lost in the conservation of wildlife, what is needed is to approach the authorities. It is apparent that when authorities intervene, efficient management of the environment would ensue. “But their friendliness was to later endanger them as poachers pounced on them, forcing Elliot to lobby former President, Robert Mugabe to grant them a special status”. This decree has saved the 450-strong elephant herd from poachers. Whilst there is a general impression that the jumbo is a powerful animal which might not be as vulnerable to predators like other animals such as the zebra, it also has to be alert because it can be attacked by other wild animals. “They must be on the looked (sic) out for hungry predators that frequently raid them and snatch their weak siblings, at the same time moving over long distances in search of better pastures”. The Guardian newspaper of the United Kingdom (UK) states that more than 140,000 of Africa’s savannah elephants

were killed for their ivory between 2007 and 2014, wiping out almost a third of their population, and one elephant is being killed by poachers every 15 minutes on average. The price of ivory has soared threefold since 2009, leading conservationists to fear the survival of the species is at risk (<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/oct/03/bid>).

### **Omission analysis**

The story “Tracking the presidential herd” does not mention that the increased numbers of wildlife have impacted negatively on the animals’ food resources. It would appear as if the scarcity is an age-old problem, yet the same story states that the same area is “the cradle of a centuries old vibrant ecosystem....” The journalist conveniently ignores the need to mention a planned and well managed culling of the wildlife to ensure that the remaining fauna has adequate resources. The story does not explain to the reader why only the jumbo was selected for special status, yet the rhino was also at risk of extermination as shown in the story, “... to track a rare lone rhino facing near extinction in this part of the world....”

### **Limiting debate**

The framing of the story “Tracking the presidential herd” was confined to the imminent threat of extinction of the wildlife and the attraction of the Hwange National Park as a tourism spot. This limited debate to the challenges being experienced by the animals, that is, food, water and poaching. What unfortunately escapes the mind of the reporter is the cause of the scarcity, the need to habituate other animal species among people, exploring how earlier human generations had co-existed with wild life, and how they had managed the environment which includes fauna and flora. “Food and water are scarce here, and for thousands of these vegetarians, their predicament is two-fold”. Since the story is a feature, the journalist had the latitude to interrogate the issue of scarcity and perhaps introduce a ‘solution frame’. The story posits that this habitat is centuries old, therefore one would want to know whether the animal population had exponentially increased over the years so much that the ratio between the animals and resources (food and water) were no longer proportionate. Assuming that was the fact, perhaps one would suggest managed culling of the animals. Underlying the challenges raised in the story could be the issue of climate change which the journalist shied away from exploring so as to give the reader a balanced, complete and informative story.

What also lingers in the periphery of this story is the fact that people in the area have the sense of co-existing with wildlife, and they are prepared to care for them. The journalist should have broadened the scope of debate by interviewing their guide how the community co-existed with the animals. He should have also interacted with the local community so as to get first-hand information on their relationship with wildlife. Suffice it to say that such an interaction could have added the dimension of indigenous knowledge systems of managing the environment. “It was the start of an exploration that would take us across rolling plains, to track a rare lone rhino facing near extinction in this part of the world, and to man-made water pools where we played witness to a blazing tug-of-war for carcasses”. It is apparent that wildlife is quenching its thirst from pools made by the community. Unfortunately, the reporter limits the debate to his exploration of the physical landscape and animals of the Hwange National Park, but dismally fails to explore the phenomenon of the apparent co-existence of humans and animals. Furthermore, the debate could have been extended to health issues; if people were also sharing the water with animals, there could be health challenges in future. The journalist seems to have considered that as normal, he could have suggested the sinking of boreholes for people’s drinking water.

Considering the rampant killing of wild animals by poachers, the reporter should have suggested that wildlife in various parts of the country be part of the ‘royalty species’. It is crystal clear that the president is more than willing to save wildlife from extinction.

Zimbabwe’s presidential elephant herd was indeed anointed when President Mugabe in that same year decreed these habituated elephants that roam the Hwange estate should never be hunted or culled; rather that they should “symbolise Zimbabwe’s commitment to responsible wildlife management, adds Miombo on its website.

*The Financial Gazette*, January 23-29, 2014 p.C4

The story also limited debate to the challenges being experienced by wildlife without proffering suggestions of incentivising communities who co-exist with the animals, for example, CAMPFIRE. When communities benefit financially or materially from the environment, they are bound to play an active role in the management of the same. The frame is on promoting tourism without the community realising any dividends from their wildlife; needless to say, such an approach serves to alienate humans from the environment. The reader would expect the journalist to highlight some of these issues in a feature story; this

might not be possible in a hard news story. The story dwelt so much on the fear that certain animal species, particularly the jumbo, are being decimated through poaching activities, at the expense of the welfare of human beings who co-exist with the animals. The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) contends that the well-being of present and future human populations depends on their attaining ecologically sustainable and socially equitable ways of living. While ecosystems adapt and evolve, humans are vulnerable, especially when ecosystem productivity drops. In order to reduce this vulnerability and increase the resilience of the poor we need to move away from a one-size-fits-all approach towards a more adaptable intervention strategy that embraces, understands and respects the complexity of ecosystems. There is also need to ensure that intervention strategies do not fight against the dynamics of the ecosystems but rather work with them (UNEP, 2006).

Even though it has been pointed out that the reporter somehow limited debate by not probing officials to explain wildlife was being destroyed, debate is actually broadened by the mere fact that the story shows that with enough will power, the poaching menace can be dealt with. The reporter highlighted that the presidential herd was at least protected from poaching activities. Therefore, the story broadens the debate by suggesting that flora and fauna have the chance of survival because the president was willing to ensure the sound management of the environment as was demonstrated in the protection of the jumbo.

Risiro, Tshuma and Bhasikiti posit that Zimbabwe has responded to environmental problems by ratifying various international and regional conventions on environmental management in order to conserve the environment. They cite the existence of CAMPFIRE. The programme involved local communities looking after their resources such as animals and forests and in turn benefit from the proceeds of these resources.

The second story in the third section that manifests the theme of poaching is “Govt losing war on poaching”. The story highlights that the poachers have become more daring and sophisticated; this is exemplified by their use of helicopters.

## 5.5 “Govt losing war on poaching”

### 5.5 Words and images

The words and image selected by the reporter for the story “Govt losing war on poaching” of 4-10 September 2014 (p. 4) paint a gloomy picture of the state of the environment. The picture of a jumbo’s carcass lying in the Hwange National Park denotes a lost battle against the poachers. The picture of game rangers standing close to the jumbo’s carcass is actually an irony. The game rangers appear in the picture armed yet poachers are killing game animals at an unprecedented rate. Again, the caption at the bottom of the picture “*Last year poachers killed over 300 elephants by lacing waterholes and salt licks with cyanide in the giant Hwange National Park*” is quite depressing. Returning to the written press, Hall (1972) analyses the different levels of meaning of newspaper photos, and their role in the production of news and the articulation of ideological themes. News photos often contain potential news elements, which are emphasized by the editor via a caption, and link to an article: it is this link that can turn a non-news photo into a news photo (1972). Barthes cited by Hall (1972), sees the primary function of the caption as one of anchorage: ‘Anchorage has the function of 'selective elucidation' – it exerts a repressive force over the relative freedom of the signifieds of the photo. It is therefore (together with the headline, which frames both photo and text and embraces them) *par excellence* the level of ideological signification. Here, the connotive power of the image is most openly specified, cashed and closed' (1972). Burgen (1983) asserts that photographs represent a narrated world, a world of cause and effect, of activities and consequences. It is also important to note that the selection of photos for news stories is subjective. Images are part of the intertextuality of the newspaper; the very nature of newspaper coverage of the news means that readers are given a snapshot of events day by day:

‘The newspaper is, in effect, a time-lapse camera that presents the non-sequential as sequential, that slows reality down from the second-by-second to the day-by-day’ (Hall 1999: 107).

Furthermore:

‘We can read the sequence of photographs in a newspaper as a shorthand or aide-memoire for the current state of the news... even if the available photos can only show us the prelude or the aftermath of a particular event, they have one advantage over the column: they preserve the present by assimilating it in their own ‘thereness’ (1999: 114-5).

Visuals play a critical role in news reporting, they tend to enhance the content of a news story. Ebel (2013) cites Dyer (1982) who asserts that people may want to agree with McLuhan's aphorism which is that 'the media is the message.' This means that the influence of the media is a result of their technology. However, people must recognise that the images conveyed by the media have, over the past thirty years, become so sophisticated and persuasive that they now organise readers' or viewers' experiences and understanding in a crucially significant way. Therefore, the pictures of slain animals tend to have a more pronounced effect than the one invoked by the text alone. Some of the words that were employed in the story, "Govt losing war on poaching" are; losing the war, lack of sufficient personnel and equipment, menace, poachers were getting more advanced, sophisticated methods and weaponry, kill dozens of endangered wildlife species, measures government was employing to combat poaching, efforts to curb the crime, hampered, cyanide poisoning, helicopters, mow down animals, wreaking havoc, wildlife sanctuaries, mobilising as much resources as possible, contain the situation, satellite tracking and radio communication, prime targets for poachers, valuable horns, huge prices, international market, worst single wildlife massacre, predators, waterholes, salt licks, extinction, stakeholders, stiffer penalties, and offenders. Butler (2009) says the technical conditions of reproduction and reproducibility themselves, that is, pictures, produce a critical shifting, if not a full deterioration of context, in relation to the frames deployed by dominant media sources during times of war. This means in the first instance that even if one could, in considering global media coverage, delimit a single 'context' for the creation of war photography, its circulation would necessarily depart from such a context. Although the image surely lands in new contexts, it also creates new contexts by virtue of that landing, becoming a part of the very process through which new contexts are delimited and formed. Implied in Butler's (2009) analysis, is that photographs are created to convey certain messages or ideologies, but may in the process generate new meanings and impressions. Pictures of the carcasses of the jumbos may not necessarily convey the message of the sophistication and callousness of the poachers, but may be revealing the inefficiency of game park authorities or the government's indifference or ineptitude.

### **Preferred meanings**

From the caption on the picture to the entire text of the story “Govt losing war on poaching”, it is apparent that the poachers have managed to outpace the government both in terms of methods and weaponry.

Environment, Water and Climate Minister, Saviour Kasukuwere, told Parliament last week that poachers were getting more advanced, as some of them were now using sophisticated methods and weaponry to kill dozens of endangered wildlife species, including elephants and rhinos.

*The Financial Gazette*, September 4-10, 2014 p.4

It is also highlighted in the story that the poaching of wildlife species is not only confined to the elephant and the rhino, several other species are at risk of extinction. The methods employed by the poachers in killing animals are barbaric because the cyanide poison is put in places which wildlife cannot avoid. This is clear from the caption on the picture, “Last year poachers killed over 300 elephants by lacing waterholes and salt licks with cyanide in the giant Hwange National Park”. Even other animals which are of no economic value to the poachers are also killed in the process of killing the valuable elephant and rhino. Possibly, from the poachers’ perspective, it is collateral damage.

After the elephants died, predators such as lions, hyenas and vultures which fed on their carcasses also perished while other animals like the kudu and buffalo that shared the same waterholes also died, collapsing at short distances from the holes and licks.

*The Financial Gazette*, September 4-10, 2014 p.4

Suffice it to say that this indiscriminate killing of animals acutely upsets Hwange National Park’s famed ecosystem. Should this proceed unchecked, it will have serious economic ramifications; animals are key to the tourism industry. The story shows that legislators are not ignorant or indifferent to the onslaught on the country’s environment. Legislators want the government to take decisive action in dealing with the poaching menace. The minister responsible for the ministry is being prodded to act. The framing of the story gives an impression of a government which is not doing enough to curb the poaching menace, and which seems to be oblivious of the importance of the Hwange National Park animals to the national economy.

He said this while responding to a question posed by Nkulumane legislator, Thamsanga Mahlangu, who wanted to know what measures government was employing to combat poaching during the parliamentary question time.

*The Financial Gazette*, September 4-10, 2014 p.4

What also comes clearly out of this story “Government losing war on poaching” is that the decimation of the animal populations has gone on unabated not only in Zimbabwe but throughout the African continent. The challenge, however, is that the journalist seems preoccupied with peddling the blame frame without endeavouring to engage with responsible authorities. Needless to say, this compromises the noble roles of the media, that is, to inform, educate and raise awareness on environmental matters. The mass media play an important role in the construction of environmental issues and problems. Accordingly, prestige-press coverage of global warming is not just a collection of news articles; it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by news articles. The parameters of this social relationship are defined, in large part, by the many journalistic norms and values that both affect what is deemed news and influence how that news is framed (Gans, (2004 [1979]); Miller and Riechert, 2000). Bennett (1996) suggests that the content of news is affected by three normative orders that individual journalists must contend with. Firstly, *political norms*, which is the idea that the proper role of the mass media is to provide the citizenry with political information that will lead to enhanced accountability on the part of elected officials. Secondly, *economic norms*, that is, the constraints on journalists working within a capitalist society in which reporting must be both efficient and profitable. Thirdly, *journalistic norms*, that is, objectivity, fairness, accuracy, balance.

The journalist, Andrew Kunambura, highlights the impact poaching has had on the country’s wildlife.

Rare wildlife species are at risk of extinction. For example, Zimbabwe has an estimated 800 black rhinos left after poachers killed more than 1500 in the last two decades.

The rest of the African continent has an estimated 2400 black rhinos, down from about 65 000 in the mid-1980s.

*The Financial Gazette*, September 4-10, 2014 p.4

The minister gives an impression that with combined regional efforts within the southern Africa, the poaching menace can be eradicated.



We hope that in the near future, we will be able to use modern methods of fighting them such as satellite tracking and radio communication. We are also in talks with other countries in the southern African region to establish cross border collaborations because poaching is affecting many other countries as well, Kasukuwere said.

*The Financial Gazette*, September 4-10, 2014 p.4

There is also this inference in the story that poaching has also continued because the sentences meted to offenders are not deterrent enough. Furthermore, the judiciary seems to be working at cross-purpose with the government when it comes to the fight against poaching.

Stakeholders have also called for stiffer penalties for offenders.

Eight of the people found guilty of last year's poisoning of elephants were slapped with effective 16-year jail terms; a punishment many thought was not deterrent enough.

*The Financial Gazette*, September 4-10, 2014 p.4

### **Omission analysis**

A journalist can express a bias by choosing to use or not to use a specific news item. Within a given story, some details can be ignored, and others included, to give readers a different opinion about the events reported. According to the American Press Institute, bias is usually embedded in the culture and language of the society on which the journalist reports. And that 'news judgement' does reflect the journalist's background as well as the news organisation's mission and business model. However, bias through omission is difficult to detect. Only by comparing news reports from a wide variety of outlets can this form of bias be observed.

"Government is losing the war on poaching owing to lack of sufficient personnel and equipment to deal with the menace". More information could have been obtained had the journalist probed for more information. The reader might want to know why such important entities like the Hwange National Park can fail to have adequate staff. If the minister had explained the reasons for the lack of adequate staff, perhaps the legislature could have suggested or proffered some solutions. Furthermore, the minister was not taken to task to elaborate what he meant by 'lack of sufficient personnel and equipment to deal with the menace'. Legislators could have asked why the security forces and police could not be roped in to assist the game rangers deal with the poachers. Even when the minister talks of lack of equipment, the reader would want to know why the Ministry of Environment, Water and

Climate cannot engage the Air Force of Zimbabwe to use their helicopters in the fight against poachers.

What is not also further explored in the story is how the illegal trade of ivory seems to be going on unchecked at international markets when there is CITES in place to investigate and curb such illegal activities. “Elephants and rhinos have been the prime target for poachers for their valuable horns that fetch huge prices on the international market”. There was room for the reporter to interrogate the environmental challenges that several nations are grappling with. According to Isa Muhammad Inuwa, the information circulation is not only confined within members of the public but the media also serve to coordinate the information flow between government and the public and vice versa. When a story on environmental lacks completeness and/or balance, it poses a danger of not effectively communicating to either the government or the public. In such a scenario, the environmental management agenda would have been weakened.

It should be noted that the selection of news sources can either broaden or narrow the scope of debate on any issue. In some instances, this can be to the detriment of the reader because he/she may fail to get a factual, true, complete and balanced story. Debate was limited to how the Zimbabwean government was losing the war on poaching without actually probing for plausible reasons why it was failing considering the resources at its disposal, both human and material. The reporter seemed to be content with the explanations which were given by the minister and this is unprofessional; the journalist is expected to be inquisitive. The story did not factor in the economic benefits the country derives from the tourism industry of which wild animals play a critical role. Tourists enjoy seeing the wild animals. Debate is silent on the fact that the minister is more reactive than proactive on the issue of poaching.

We continue receiving information that poachers are wreaking havoc in wildlife sanctuaries. We are trying our best to contain the situation. Our efforts are being hampered by the shortage of manpower and equipment given that these poachers are using more and more sophisticated methods, he said.

*The Financial Gazette*, September 4-10, 2014 p.4

But, when one considers the number of animals which have been killed hitherto by poachers, government's sincerity is questioned. Debate could have been broadened had the reporter

asked the minister why he as minister was allowing such large numbers of animals to be lost to poaching. The reporter should have raised the issue of the minister's competence to lead such an important ministry. The story further gives an impression that Parliament was satisfied with the minister's explanation that they were losing the war against poaching due to lack of personnel and equipment. The reader would expect the legislature to engage the minister at this juncture and probe him to elaborate on where revenue from tourism was being directed to if the wildlife is being allowed to perish. The reporter limited debate to the poaching of the elephant and the rhino yet ignoring the illegal ivory trade. Broadening debate to international ivory trade would have created a platform for both the reader and governments to interrogate CITES' sincerity and capacity to monitor and curb illegal trade in ivory. "Elephants and rhinos have been the prime target for poachers for their valuable horns that fetch huge prices on the international market". There was also need to establish the source of the cyanide that was being used to lace waterholes and salt licks. This is one area where investigative journalism would play a crucial role in managing the environment and dealing with the poaching of wild animals. The story "Govt losing war on poaching" narrowed the scope of the debate by not comprehensively tackling the issue of court sentences imposed on poachers. It was an opportune time for Minister Kasukuwere to lobby parliament to deliberate on the issue of penalties for poaching offenders the same way it has legislated rape sentences.

Stakeholders have also called for stiffer penalties for offenders.

Eight of the people found guilty of last year's poisoning of elephants were slapped with effective 16-year jail terms; a punishment many thought was not deterrent enough".

*The Financial Gazette*, September 4-10, 2014 p.4

Apart from the eight poachers who were imprisoned, there is nothing else to show for the hyped (Zimbabwe Conservation) taskforce.

The (Zimbabwe Conservation) taskforce, which we set up is mobilising as much resources as possible to help fight the poachers. Both the government and the corporate world are coming together to help contain the situation. The Environmental Management Agency is also assisting us with investigations. We are using helicopters to track them down and we are also working with the Zimbabwe Republic Police and other forces.

*The Financial Gazette*, September 4-10, 2014 p.4

Interrogating the efforts mentioned by Kasukuwere would be pertinent since the situation at Hwange National Park has not shown signs of improvement, if anything it has actually deteriorated. This observation is buttressed by the observation made by conservationists with regard to poaching activities. However, inasmuch as there was limiting of debate, somehow, the story expanded debate in the sense that it created room for the readers to try to question why the government fails to give due attention to the conservation of the environment.

While this portrayal may somehow limit debate, it can also expand the debate by drawing the attention of the reader to the apparent ineptitude of government to deal with environmental issues. This may culminate in citizens questioning the calibre of people who are appointed to head government ministries and parastatals.

The story in the fourth section focuses on siltation. The two preceding stories in section three were seized with highlighting the illegal activities of the poachers and how the game parks authorities and the government were proving ineffective in curbing the menace. The story on siltation of Lake Chivero will further show how human activities pose danger to the environment.

## **5.6 “Siltation threatens Chivero water supplies”**

### **5.6 Words and symbols**

In the story “Siltation threatens Chivero water supplies”, published in *The Financial Gazette* of 4-10 December 2014 (p. 3), Lake Chivero’s further existence as Harare’s main water source is under serious threat. The threat is as a result of urban agriculture, deposition of silt into the lake, pollution from sewerage effluent, industrial and domestic waste, fertilizer and pesticide from peri-urban agricultural activities in the catchment area. ““We have been facing challenges with pumping water from the reservoir. Silt has now overwhelmed the intake pumps,” said Clifford Muzofa of Harare City Environmental Department””. What is apparent from words such as *alternative water source* is that Lake Chivero is dying gradually as a result of siltation among other negative activities of human beings. The words and the images employed in the media tend to influence how texts are decoded. Goldsen postulates that

language describes existing realities, to be sure; but it does more than *just* describe; and the reality it describes is not immutable. Language guides our vision, making it easier for us to look here and avoid looking there. If we do not look, we do not see – which is how it happens that language can even change the way we experience reality, almost without anyone noticing (Goldsen, 1975). Chari (2013) posits that the extensive coverage of the country's land revolution in the local and global media, particularly after the launch of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) in the year 2000 attests to the potency of the mass media in public opinion formation. The news media determine which issues members of the public think and talk about. Through various discursive practices and interpretative frameworks, the media direct the public's attention to certain issues and formulate certain mental pictures and perceptions in readers (McCombs 2002; Lipman, 1922). According to Tuchman, framing accentuates the role of the media in the construction of social reality (Tuchman, 1978).

### **Preferred meanings**

The story "Siltation threatens Chivero water supplies" is framed to drive home the point that the lake is gradually dying because authorities are not paying heed to what experts are saying about siltation. Authorities are expected to ban or control urban agriculture so as to save the lake from further decline.

According to Nhiwatiwa, urban agriculture has been a major contributor, submitting that scientific consensus is that developments on wetland will ultimately jeopardize the supply of clean drinking water to the city, as wetlands are primarily natural filtration systems.

*The Financial Gazette*, December 4-10, 2014 p.3

There is also the innuendo that the local government (City of Harare) and the central government do not only disregard advice from local experts, but even trash international conventions, for instance, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. It is clear in the story that wetlands are critical for the maintenance of a sound ecosystem and water bodies like Lake Chivero. The lake is approaching destruction because the nation has failed to promote the sustainable utilisation and conservation of wetlands.

The lake is Harare's main water supply reservoir which is one of seven Ramsar sites of Zimbabwe designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, which provides

a framework for wetland conservation and asks that nations promote the sustainable utilisation and conservation of wetlands.

*The Financial Gazette*, December 4-10, 2014 p.3

Golding and Murdock cited in Curran and Gurevitch (1996) posit that work on communications from within a cultural studies perspective ‘is centrally concerned with the construction of meaning – how it is produced in and through particular expressive forms and how it is continually negotiated and deconstructed through the practices of everyday life’ (Murdock, 1989a: 436). In contrast to transportation models, which see media forms such as thrillers, soap operas or documentary films as vehicles for transmitting ‘messages’ to consumers, cultural studies approaches them as mechanisms for ordering meaning in particular ways. When content analysis sees the meaning of say, a violent act in a television drama, as definable in advance and detachable from its position in the text or the programme’s relation to other texts, cultural studies insists that its meaning is variable and depends crucially on the contexts supplied by the overall narrative, the programme’s genre, and the previous publicity surrounding the show and its stars. Precisely, the meanings deduced from environmental news stories are as a result of the interaction between the media consumer and the texts. Environmental news is not value free, there are ideologies, meanings and perspectives which the journalists or media houses deliberately choose to foster and transmit.

One other disturbing aspect which comes out clearly from this story is that there is lack of a clear policy within the town council considering that it is even borrowing money for the rehabilitation of water works yet they are not addressing the issue of siltation which is making it difficult to pump water out of Lake Chivero. The reporters through choice of words, that is, inclusions and exclusions, endeavour to shape and convey particular meanings. The relationship between texts and social practice is bridged by the discursive practice. Discursive practice is the production, distribution, and consumption of text in which the text is shaped by social practice (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Texts are usually consumed differently according to the social context and its interpretation depends on the foci of the mode. An example which can be relevant to this particular content is the interpretation of a recipe. Literally, a recipe is known to contain description; however, it is unusual for a recipe to be read in a mode which is highly rhetorical or aesthetical. The preferred meaning generated in the story “Siltation threatens Chivero water supplies” is that the environmental

challenge at Lake Chivero is a symptom of a dysfunctional state system. This is apparent in the sense that this water body, Lake Chivero, is critical to the health and general well-being of the residents of the capital city. If the government was cognisant and responsive to this fact, definitely, the situation could have been different.

Whereas at face value there is a limiting of debate, the story “Siltation threatens Chivero water supplies” actually expanded debate when it adopted a blame frame though lamely trying to come up with a solution frame. It would appear that the journalist limited debate by allowing the officials and experts to simply narrate the problems of siltation at Lake Chivero without actually naming the culprits, and proffering solutions. Considering the importance of the lake to the capital city, the journalist was expected to be aggressive in probing the authorities to suggest lasting solutions to the issue of siltation. He should have engaged Harare City Council officials to explain why they cannot solve the problem of siltation and the violation of wetlands. Probably, this could have given a political dimension to the siltation theme. But presenting the story the way he did, he opened an opportunity for citizens to question the city fathers why they were not attending to the problem of siltation expeditiously. The story actually exposes the Harare City Council that it is inefficient and has its priorities upside down.

Harare City Council officials, water experts and environmentalists admitted this week that the silting up of the capital’s main source of water was now a major cause for concern as it has begun affecting the pumps that draw water out from the reservoir to Morton Jaffray Water Works.

*The Financial Gazette*, December 4-10, 2014 p.3

The debate on siltation challenges, can enlighten the reader on the issue of rule of law. In a functional system where you have state entities like the Environmental Management Agency (EMA), one would expect close monitoring of the environment ensuring that critical resources like Lake Chivero are protected from pollution. The story should have looked at the city’s by-laws and the mandate of EMA in as far as environmental issues are concerned. The story could have broadened the scope of debate by questioning factors which might be emasculating the city council authorities and EMA from addressing issues of siltation and other vices. “Lake Chivero has also been under threat from pollution from sewerage effluent,

industrial and domestic waste, fertilizer and pesticide from peri-urban agricultural activities in the catchment area”. At this stage, the reporter could even engage the responsible minister to explain why such illegal activities are being allowed to take place when they pose such danger to the environment and water supply to the capital city.

When sewerage effluent and industrial waste are allowed to find their way into the lake, obviously the health of citizens is put at risk. By not asking why authorities have turned a blind eye to the challenges of siltation, the reporter inadvertently frames the siltation as a minor threat, which it is not. “The pumps are being clogged up by severe sedimentation resulting in them constantly malfunctioning”. Another statement which points to the environmental disaster obtaining at Lake Chivero is captured in the following statement; “On our last count the lake had lost about nine metres due to silting. We should be thinking of building an alternative water source considering the rate at which the lake is silting,” said Magadza. To a certain extent, the story does not inform the reader about what is more costly, that is, dealing and eliminating factors causing the siltation or to build another water source with an equivalent or more capacity than Lake Chivero. The story “Siltation threatens Chivero water supplies” had the potential of giving the journalist the latitude to gather more information which could have helped the reader to have a clear picture of the environmental challenges posed by the siltation of Chivero water supplies. Silence on this issue somehow normalises a clearly abnormal situation; the lake was built prior to the country’s independence in 1980, but siltation is taking place in post-independence Zimbabwe. Lake Mchlwaine (now Lake Chivero) was a healthy water source during the colonial period. The reporter could have widened the scope of debate by interrogating whether the city’s exponential population growth caused by the rural to urban influx could be the cause of the violation of the water body (Lake Chivero) and the wetlands.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

The thrust of this chapter was to present and analyse the framing and agenda setting of the media coverage of environmental news published in *The Financial Gazette* in 2014. Since this study identified three media theories as defining and underpinning the reportage of



environmental issues, the chapter sought also to locate the relevance and application of the third theory, that is, development media theory.

The first section discussed theoretical works in which the chapter is anchored. Of importance is Chari (2013) who contends that news reporting is based on framing and that within each framing there are elements or aspects of a phenomenon that are projected as salient. The second section of this chapter debated stories that emphasize Harare's wetlands that are under threat due to illegal settlements being constructed on them. The framing of the story "Wetlands under new threat" denotes either an intermittent or incessant onslaught on the city's wetlands. Intermittent in the sense that at one time EMA cautioned residents not to interfere with the wetland in the form of carrying out farming activities and they seemed to have complied. The violation is incessant in the sense that the wetland has always been violated by residents either through residential construction or farming activities.

The third section of this chapter analysed stories to do with the challenges being faced by the industry; and the imminent extinction of certain tree species, for example, the Murara tree. In the same breath is the story "Timber industry in doldrums" which depicts a lawless society which is ignorant of the economic and ecological importance of the timber industry and the forests respectively. In setting the agenda, the story lays the blame of the collapse of the once vibrant timber industry on the government's haphazard land reform. The story also shows how some members of the ruling party, ZANU PF are out of touch with real political and economic issues; instead of identifying illegal invasions of the forests as the real problem; Kenneth Saruchera lies that the discovery of diamonds in Manicaland has overshadowed the timber industry. The "Tree species under threat" story sets an agenda for the authorities to act on the illegal invasion of forests by the settlers. It calls on the authorities to apply the rule of law to stem the illegal invasion of forests which are important to the economy, and to the issue of climate change. In setting the agenda in this story, the media insinuates that the government has and continues to be indifferent to the illegal activities being carried out by some unruly people.

The fourth section analysed two stories on the war against poaching. The stories are; ‘Tracking the presidential herd’, and “Govt losing war on poaching”. “Tracking the presidential herd” story’s framing wittingly or unwittingly shows that the earlier generations of the inhabitants even before the advent of colonialism had co-existed with wildlife. They had an appreciation for the environment. For them to co-exist with wildlife there was the use of indigenous knowledge systems which emphasized the symbiotic relationship between man and nature. Furthermore, the story reveals that with political will, nature can be well conserved, as exemplified by the protection of the presidential elephant herd which was protected from culling or poaching through the presidential decree.

Zimbabwe’s presidential elephant herd was indeed anointed when President Mugabe in that same year decreed these habituated elephants that roam the Hwange estate should never be hunted or culled; rather that they should “symbolise Zimbabwe’s commitment to responsible wildlife management, adds Miombo on its website.

*The Financial Gazette*, January 23-29, 2014 p. C4

The framing of “Govt losing war on poaching” buttresses the observation that the Minister of Environment, Water and Climate, Saviour Kasukuwere is not doing enough to curb the scourge of poaching. His assertion that the poachers were getting more advanced as some of them were now using sophisticated weaponry sounds hollow considering that they (Ministry) had also engaged the services of the police and air force who obviously have more advanced weaponry than the poachers. The story carries the innuendo that Kasukuwere is more of a reactionary than a proactive minister when one considers his dithering with regards to addressing the issue of poaching.

The fifth section analysed on the siltation of Lake Chivero. The story “Siltation threatens Chivero water supplies” has a blame frame. The framing of the story exposes the both the local and central governments’ indifference to the siltation menace threatening to destroy the city’s main water supply, Lake Chivero. The lack of action on the part of authorities will culminate in the ultimate closure of the lake due to siltation. ““On our last count the lake had lost about nine metres due to silting. We should be thinking of building an alternative water source considering the rate at which the lake is silting,” said Magadza””.

The next chapter sought to analyse the coverage of environmental issues by *The Sunday Mail*. Focus will be on the agenda-setting and framing of environmental news. The paper being state owned has a national responsibility to publish developmental news, hence the development media theory can be very pertinent to the coverage of environmental news by *The Sunday Mail*.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **Environmental Reporting by *The Sunday Mail***

#### **6. Introduction**

This chapter sought to analyse news on the environment in the stories which were published in *The Sunday Mail* of 2014. The three media theories, namely; agenda-setting, framing and development media theory which are considered relevant to this study will be employed in the analysis of the news stories. This chapter interrogated how *The Sunday Mail* presented environmental news, through words and symbols employed. The idea was to bring different meanings from the slanting of ideological agendas set, the framing of news to influence a particular reading. The paper suggests how the newspaper could have utilised the development media theory in environmental news. This chapter endeavoured to establish whether the weekly has managed to comprehensively and objectively cover environmental news. It is critical to interrogate the media theories which are employed in the reportage of environmental news considering that the development media theory has been systematically marginalised or submerged by the ‘popular’ four theories of the press. McQuail (2004) posits that the main idea behind development communication theory is media for development of people in a nation or to help the target population. Communication seeks to serve the people without manipulation and encourage genuine response. There is no propaganda as ulterior motive of communication. Communication is to develop conscientization or critical consciousness which can be about self-responsibility, social conscience and self-determination for right judgments and for social communication. The theory was used for social change. McQuail (2005) asserts that in the overall interest of development, the state has the right to intervene in media operations by the use of censorship devices, especially when the activities of the press do not dovetail with the development goals of the state. Among non-democratic media theories such as the authoritarian theory and Soviet theory, (McQuail, 2005), also include development media theory. Development media theory is

partly a product of western communication scholarship and foreign development projects. Development media theory is authoritarianism for good cause; supporting the economic development and nation-building efforts of impoverished societies.

### **6.1 Agenda-setting and reporting the Environment**

Davis and Robinson (1986) criticised previous agenda-setting research for neglecting possible effects on what people think concerning who is important, where important things happen, and why things are important. For instance, readers may get to know that the conservation of wetlands is important since they can avoid floods and are a natural filtration system. According to Rogers and Dearing (1987), there is need to clearly distinguish between three different agendas: the priorities of the media, those of the public and those of policy. *The Sunday Mail* has its priorities as a media house, the public who consume the media products have their priorities as well, and one can talk of the parent ministry's policy or policies vis-à-vis the role of the media in the dissemination of information. Agenda-setting effects are not unlike most other known effects in that they are also contingent on the right combination of factors in respect of the topic, the type of media and the larger context. Li Li (Media Salience and the Process of Framing: Coverage of the Professor Prostitution. p. 35) avers that the agenda-setting researcher pays close attention to the salience of events and regards it as focal point. One of the underlying assumptions about the agenda-setting theory is that once an event had appeared in agenda-setting, the increasing percentage of this news event would also increase the importance and salience of it.

### **6.2 Framing the Environment in *The Sunday Mail***

The frames used by journalists "assign meaning to and interpret relevant events and conditions" (Snow & Benford, 1988, p. 198). It would be naïve for one to assume that all media texts represent reality; they are framed to give a semblance of reality. Climate change communicators have been trying to focus their attention on the nature of the language they use in framing in order to ascertain how it resonates with the people's world views, representations and experiences. Frames are not static nor are they exclusively confined to a particular story or genre; in fact, they break and combine depending with the objectives of the encoder. Butler (2009) posits that the frame that seeks to contain, convey, and determine

what is seen (and sometimes, for a stretch, succeeds in doing precisely that) depends upon the conditions of reproducibility in order to succeed. And yet, this very reproducibility entails a constant breaking from context, a constant delimitation of new context, which means that the “frame” does not quite contain what it conveys, but breaks apart every time it seeks to give definitive organisation to its content. Frames in environmental reporting can be political or economic; blame or solution frames. McCombs and Shaw (2004) postulate that in choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position. They, however, say that, although there is no evidence that mass media deeply change attitudes in a campaign is far from conclusive, the evidence is much stronger that voters learn from the immense quantity of information available during each campaign. On the other hand, Entman (1991) posits that comparing media narratives of events that could have been reported similarly helps to reveal the critical textual choices that framed the story but would otherwise remain submerged in an undifferentiated text. Unless narratives are compared, frames are difficult to detect fully and reliably, because many of the framing devices can appear as “natural,” unremarkable choices of words or images (p. 6). Agenda-setting refers to the idea that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media place on certain issues, for example, based on relative placement or amount of coverage and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences (McCombs, 2004). Framing differs significantly from agenda-setting. It is based on how an issue is characterised in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences. Notwithstanding these apparent differences, both methods have elements of persuasion and manipulation. A central question in the comparison between framing and basic agenda setting is the locus of cognitive effect. In both cases, audiences process information provided by the news media and store it in memory. The traditional agenda-setting approach is based on memory-based models of information processing and therefore an accessibility model (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Agenda-setting effects assume that the locus of effect lies with the heightened accessibility an issue receives from its treatment in the news (Price & Tewksbury, 1997). Thus, it is not information about the issue that has the effect; it is the fact that the issue has received a certain amount of processing time and attention that carries the effect.

In contrast, the basic framing approach assumes that the locus of effect lies within description of an issue or the label used in news coverage about the issue. It is the underlying interpretive schemas that have been made applicable to the issue that are the central effect of a frame. The primary difference on the psychological level between agenda-setting and priming, on the one hand, and framing, on the other hand, it is therefore the difference between whether we think about an issue and how we think about it. It has been argued that we can develop a more parsimonious understanding of framing, priming, and agenda-setting if we subsume all three concepts under the larger umbrella of agenda-setting. In particular, McCombs (2004) has argued that framing is simply a more refined version of agenda-setting. Framing, from that perspective, means making aspects of an issue more salient through different modes of presentation and therefore shifting people's attitudes. He labels this phenomenon "second-level agenda-setting".

Many researchers, however, challenge the idea that agenda-setting and priming, on the one hand, and framing, on the other hand, are based on the same theoretical premises and are therefore all extensions of the larger agenda-setting construct (Price & Tewksbury, 1997; Scheufele, 2000:184). Price and Tewksbury summarise this distinction as follows:

Agenda-setting [sic] looks on story selection as a determinant of public perceptions of issue importance and, indirectly through priming, evaluations of political leaders. Framing focuses not on which topics or issues are selected for coverage by the news media, but instead on the particular ways those issues are presented. (p. 184).

The focus of development media theory, which is, inter alia, to accept and carry out positive development tasks that are in line with the policies formulated by the political leadership would definitely resonate with the vision and aspirations of developing countries. The theory proposes that the media should therefore give priorities to the coverage of those areas that touch on the lives of the people. This is to say that; content should be development-driven and should centre on socio-economic and political lives of the people (Scheufele & Tewksbury). These attributes make the development media theory to employ in environmental reporting.

### **6.3 Rethinking Development Theory in the Reportage of the Environment in *The Sunday Mail***

The development media theory favours positive uses of the media in national development, for the autonomy and cultural identity for the particular national society (McQuail, 2010). IKS identifies the environment as a context where flora and fauna are inseparable, they are interdependent. Hence the media should in its environmental reporting highlight and support the natural and moral responsibility to conserve the environment for sustainable utilisation of the natural resources. The current generation should be allowed to sustainably exploit the resources, and manage for future generations.

### **6.4 Reportage of Wildlife Management, Climate Change and Land Reclamation in *The Sunday Mail***

The section below analyses the reportage on environment, particularly on stories which emphasize on wildlife management, climate change, and land reclamation. It is not practically possible to use every story published on environment, the selection was purposive, that is, only those stories which were deemed very relevant and critical to the topic were selected. The first story to be analysed is one on possible extinction of the African elephant, “A giant about to vanish”. Considering the economic value of wildlife to tourism and the national economy, the disappearance of the elephants and other animal species through poaching, would impact negatively on the country’s economy and tourist industry.

In the story below on the possible extinction of the jumbo “A giant about to vanish”, focus is on the challenges posed to wildlife by the activities of the poachers. The analysis interrogates the possibility of curbing poaching activities through the use of international instruments on environmental conservation. The revitalisation of the game parks security is also critical in the discussion.

### **6.5 “A giant about to vanish”**

#### **6.5 Words and symbols**

The reporter of the story “A giant about to vanish” chose words and phrases such as; current crisis, endangered species, threatened species are at risk from human activities, hunted to extinction, children born in 2040 are unlikely to see a wild elephant, cyanide poisoning, threaten the population of Africa’s “keystone” species, the magnificent beasts are being “butchered left, right and centre and have nowhere to hide, illegal trade in ivory, and poachers.

Words used in this story depict a bleak and gloomy future for Africa’s elephant. “Intensive illegal hunting of elephants for ivory, trophies, meat, medicines and jewellery; habitat loss and, to a lesser extent, climate change-induced droughts, have reduced elephant populations on the continent to less than 650 000”. What is also communicated by the story through the selected words is that the onslaught on the environment has been ongoing for decades unabated. “Records show that despite an estimated five million elephants having roamed Africa from the Mediterranean coast to the southern tip of the continent just 60 years ago, only a tenth of that population remains”. The story also denotes an entire continent which is oblivious or ignorant of the value of its natural resources which are actually enriching other nations. “Africa is staring at a looming, regrettable man-made catastrophe and the continent will soon wake up unable to locate one of its cherished treasures”. Furthermore, it appears that the fight against poaching is an uphill struggle since there is a lucrative market for Africa’s ivory in other continents. This is implied in the following statement; “Elephant protection watchdogs say illegal trade in ivory is driven and sustained by consumers who are willing to pay high prices for the commodity, regardless of its origin or legality”. The choice of words to employ in a story can have a great bearing on the decoding of the story by the reader. Dyer postulates that when we choose a word we do more than name an object, person or situation, we also convey feelings about what we are describing. Words not only describe things, the, associations and attitudes – they bring ideas to our minds (Dyer, 1990).

### **Preferred meanings**

The rationale of consciously selecting words and symbols, as well as images, is to influence the reception and interpretation of media texts. In some instances there is this naivety on the part of the media that the consumers just take messages as encoded. But the reader is not only a consumer of already-encoded meanings, but also producers of the meanings of the text. The framing of the story, “A giant about to vanish” can create pessimism and dejection on the part



of the reader after reading the statistics of the jumbos that were killed by poachers. According to McQuail, the idea of framing is an attractive one and provides a strong hypothesis that an audience will be guided by journalistic frames in what it learns. It will also learn the frames themselves (McQuail, 2010). “Roughly, 100 elephants were poached in the country last year, but additional that, there are some which may have been poached outside the country as elephants tend to cross into neighbouring reserves,” she told *The Sunday Mail In-Depth*”. The reporter also wants to highlight that there is no safe haven for the elephant; if it is not killed in Zimbabwe, it will still be killed in a reserve in another country. It is also embedded in the story that even the support being rendered by international organisations to ameliorate the poaching scourge is not yielding significant results. Numbers of Africa’s “keystone” species continue to dwindle at a rapid rate.

Last week, the authority received 23 all-terrain vehicles and kits for rangers to combat elephant poaching in the Hwange National Park. The development came as a new United Nations report shows that in 2012, more than 22 000 elephants were killed in Africa alone. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) states that despite the 2012 figure being 3000 less than the killings in 2011, the drop is not enough and poaching continues to threaten the population of Africa’s “keystone” species.

*The Sunday Mail*, March 9-15, 2014 In Depth p.1

The story is also framed to give the meaning that Africa’s governments’ efforts to curb poaching and protect its wildlife are being frustrated by the countries which are tolerating illegal trade in ivory. “Elephant protection watchdogs say illegal trade in ivory is driven and sustained by consumers who are willing to pay high prices for the commodity, regardless of its origin or legality”. What is also implied in the story is the existence of a lawless society which disregards even international conventions such as the CITES and pronouncements on the need to conserve wildlife. It is also apparent that the blatant attack on Africa’s environment has also a political dimension. The political instability in parts of the continent has fuelled the illegal killing of elephants and the illegal ivory trade.

Experts concluded that the high levels of poaching, especially in East, West and Central Africa, is facilitated by conflicts which have, through lawlessness, provided arms for illegal killing of elephants. Furthermore, highly organised criminal networks operate with relative impunity to move large shipments of ivory off the continent to Asian markets.

*The Sunday Mail*, March 9-15, 2014 In Depth p.1

What is also disturbing is that countries like Zimbabwe which still has a sizeable number of the elephants are not keen to learn from other countries whose animal populations have been

wiped out. There are no accurate records to show the total population of the elephants and one is left wondering how entities like the Hwange National Park would be able to monitor and evaluate the state of the wildlife.

Critics say with the rate at which jumbos are being slaughtered, it is worrisome to note that the country has no accurate records on its elephants.

Very few new surveys were conducted in Zimbabwe since 2007 and covered a small percentage of the overall (elephant) population. Half of the estimates included in the current update are now older than 10 years, resulting in an overall degradation of the quality of data from Zimbabwe, said Elephant Database in its 2012 report.

This lack of systematic and updated monitoring data is of serious concern for possibly the third largest elephant population in Africa.

*The Sunday Mail*, March 9-15, 2014, In Depth p.1

The foregoing are some of the preferred meanings which the reporter constructed through the use of words and statistics in the story “A giant about to vanish” in *The Sunday Mail* of 9-15 March 2014 (In-Depth [p.1.]). But as Bignell contends, preferred meanings have a very uncertain usefulness as knowledge since it is unclear whether they are meanings necessarily produced by the signs within a text, or the meanings most commonly perceived by real readers, or whether preferred meanings are only evident to academic analysts looking below the surface meanings of signs/words to the mythic social meanings they support (Bignell, 1997).

### **Omission analysis**

The story “A giant about to vanish” largely narrates the possible extinction of the jumbo of Africa without clearly proffering solution frames. The characterisation of the killing of elephants by poachers depicts a sealed fate, but the story fails to give credence to efforts, isolated though, made by some African governments, and some non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The story omits to inform the reader that in some instances, all of Africa’s efforts to conserve wildlife are being rendered ineffective by the international community’s reluctance to reprimand those countries, for example, China, which has provided a ready market for Africa’s looted ivory.

China’s ivory market has flourished as a result of changes in wealth and consumer spending patterns that the World Bank attributed to economic growth in the Asian country over the last 20 years.

Experts say consumers in China view ivory as a status symbol with a kilogramme of ivory selling for more than \$2 000 on the streets of Beijing while a single tusk can fetch up to \$50 000.

Investigations revealed that ivory from West and Central Africa is in demand because it is hard, more elastic and suitable for carving than that from Eastern and Southern Africa or Asia.

*The Sunday Mail*, March 9-15, 2014 In Depth p.1

The reporter did not seek to ascertain why and how it is difficult for Africa to regulate its ivory trade as this would to a certain extent reduce the illegal trade in ivory obtaining now. “The prevalence of unregulated domestic ivory markets in many African cities, coupled with the large number of potential Asian buyers residing in Africa associated with infrastructure projects and resource extraction operations, also fuel the demand for ivory”. The reporter failed to interrogate the irony of ‘protected areas’. “Poachers have been daringly targeting elephants in protected areas or on private land while the networks of receivers, facilitators and buyers moving illegal ivory across international borders continue to thrive” From the statement, it was needful for the reporter to prod for a solution, for example, increasing levels of security for animals in protected areas. At least there should be places or safe havens for some wildlife species to ensure that there will not be cases of extinction. Apart from words and symbols employed by journalists in news stories to give them a particular angle or slant; omission of certain information, sources consulted/interviewed or omitted have a great bearing on the import of environmental news. In media and cultural studies the idea of a preferred meaning that is embedded within a media text came from Stuart Hall then director of Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCS) at Birmingham University. Media studies recognises that no media text is just “neutral”, instead it is recognised that each media text carries a range of meanings that have been encoded into the text either deliberately or at a more unconscious level. The meanings are embedded by using a range of technical codes such as camera angles which can often imply power relationships.

### **Limiting debate**

The debate on “A giant about to vanish” was limited to the ongoing plunder of Africa’s wildlife by poachers and some international syndicates but failed to introduce into the environmental discourse solid solution frames. The story implies that at one stage some of the developed countries were involved in the illegal trade in ivory but through education and awareness, they have relented.

While demand in the 20<sup>th</sup> century markets like Europe, North America and more recently, Japan, has dwindled through awareness campaigns linking ivory to the death of elephants, emerging markets in China and Thailand have put the African elephant on target.

*The Sunday Mail*, March 9-15, 2014 In Depth p.1

The scope of the environmental debate could have been broadened to suggest awareness and education programmes for countries like China and Thailand on the dangers the illegal ivory trade poses to Africa’s wildlife. Considering that China has made significant inroads in creating diplomatic rapport with the majority of Africa’s countries, there is high probability that in the interests of economic and political relations, China would cooperate with the continent to stem the poaching and illegal ivory trade tide. Furthermore, in widening the debate scope, the story “A giant about to vanish” the reporter should have introduced a solution frame, that is, suggesting alternatives to ivory use. To simply proscribe the use of something without proffering other alternatives may not work effectively.

Investigations show that the animals are mostly slaughtered for their ivory which is used in making billiard balls, piano keys, Scottish bagpipes, buttons, chop sticks and a wide range of ornamental items.

*The Sunday Mail*, March 9-15, 2014 In Depth p.1

The reporter could have researched on what markets in Europe, North America and Japan are now using as alternatives to Africa’s ivory to manufacture the items. The story would have added value to the fight against the poaching of Africa’s elephants. Since “A giant about to vanish” is a feature story, the reporter could have used the time and space available to enrich the debate by alerting policy makers and conservationists that environmental management is incumbent upon individual states. Relying on the goodwill of international organisations like CITES may not guarantee the safety and sustainability of wildlife. This is illustrated by the statement below;

Despite the 1989 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) ban on international trade in ivory, thousands of the endangered animals continue to die. Conservationists say understanding the reasons behind the recent surge in elephant poaching is no simple task.

*The Sunday Mail*, March 9-15, 2014 In Depth p.1

Finding out why countries like China engage in illegal ivory trade with impunity would have given another dimension to the debate; that of international law governing trade in ivory. Sanctions have been imposed on other states which have flouted international in areas such as human rights. Considering that there is a symbiotic relationship between humans and wildlife; international law should treat the violation of animal rights the same way human rights are treated. The preceding story “A giant about to vanish” focused on the scourge of poaching which threatens to decimate the African elephants. It highlighted how and why the illegal trade of ivory has continued in places like China. The story could also have highlighted that UNEP should actually be vocal about the destruction of the environment since it has the mandate of monitoring and assessing global, regional and national trends related to the environment. UNEP also does the developing of national and international tools to address environmental problems. It also assists national institutions like EMA that support environmental management.

Another story that deals with wildlife management is “West blocks Zim wildlife trade”. In the story, focus is on the challenge being encountered by Zimbabwe concerning the right to sell its elephant calves. Western countries and their media were fighting to block Zimbabwe notwithstanding the economic benefits which would accrue to the country. The story “West blocks Zim wildlife trade” reveals that Western governments made concerted efforts to deny Zimbabwe the right to sell its ivory. Even though CITES had given the country the reprieve to trade its ivory, some governments were frustrating the country’s efforts to take part in a legal trade in ivory. The country wanted to sell its elephant calves so that it could maintain the reserves’ carrying capacity. Furthermore, the rationale of wanting to sell the elephants is to bring money into the country as well as bringing benefits to communities living in the vicinities of the game reserves. The media and the Western governments have given a wrong impression to the international community that Zimbabwe is a violator of animal rights. The story has a blame frame in its attack against the western countries and their media.

The fact that CITES gave the country the green light to sell its elephants shows that the country was operating within the confines of international law regulating trade in wildlife. “The embargo and recent media outcry by the international community has us being viewed as a violator of animal rights but as a wildlife authority we do not operate without observing international trade laws”. It is inferred in the story that the western governments are abusing the media for their selfish ends. The story, furthermore, though stealthily, raises the issue of the independence of the media. One questions whether the western media have the audacity to interrogate their governments’ standpoints or narratives in relation to their economic or political relations with other countries. Implied in the story “West blocks Zim wildlife trade” is the setting of an agenda, this time by Zimbabwe’s press through this story; to query the integrity of the western media. The agenda-setting brings the reader of this story to reflect on the western media’s ‘obsession’ to exclusively focus on negativity in its reportage of Africa. The western countries are not mentioned in the story and why they would oppose Zimbabwe. Fairclough asserts that, unsurprisingly, analysis of representation is mainly analysis of what is ‘there’ in the text. But it is also important to be sensitive to absences from the text, to things which might have been ‘there’, but aren’t – or, and this really comes down to the same thing, to things which are present in some texts appertaining to a given area of social practice, but not in others. For instance, a story on the sale of wildlife may solely focus on challenges pertaining to the CITES regulations, but exclude the involvement of some authorities in the illegal trade in ivory (Fairclough, 1995). Herman and Chomsky (1998) and Pilger (1992) extend Fairclough’s observation to suggest that a more general absence which commentators have noted is an absence of historical context in most news stories; news is standardly constructed in terms of events which are treated as more or less isolated from prior or subsequent events – isolated from history. Without assigning IKS to a historical silo, there is no gainsaying that it has a well defined historicity when one looks at how indigenous people have analysed, interpreted and interrogated natural phenomena, for example, climate change.

The development media theory would have been apt in presenting a developmental discourse in the form of supporting the government in their objective to cull their animal population. Since the role of the media under this theory is to be sensitive and responsive to the state agenda in the context of socio-economic development, *The Sunday Mail* should have been at

the forefront of disseminating correct information to both the locals and the international community on the rationale of allowing Zimbabwe to sell its wildlife. Ucheanya (2003), as cited by Chinenye Nwabueze assert that the roles of the media in national development lie in their capacity to teach, manipulate, sensitize and mobilise people through information dissemination. The media also chart a course for the public in line with the agenda setting theory, thereby creating in the minds of the people, issues that would be viewed as priority issues including development programmes and policies (Nwabueze, 2005). A mass society is characterised by greater reliance on the mass media for information and news about the environment in which the people live. Therefore, in this context, the media are supposed to inform communities of the state of the environment and how best they could utilize it sustainably and bequeath it to future generations in a sound state.

The story “West blocks Zim wildlife trade” revealed the machinations of the western countries in frustrating Zimbabwe in its endeavour to sustainably utilise its resources. It also highlighted the fact that international organisations like CITES which have the mandate of overseeing the management of the environment may not have the political muscle to objectively and impartially discharge their mandate.

In *The Sunday Mail of 2014*; five climate-related stories were published. The stories are as follows; “The climate change merry-go-round politics” (14 December 2014, p.12Extra; “El Nino is coming – are we ready?” (31 August 2014, p. 2 Extra); “Climate change and farming” (30 November 2014, p. 4 Extra); “Trees, dams can fight climate change” (7 December 2014, p. 14 Extra); and “Rainfall pattern now unpredictable” (7 December 2014, p. 4 Extra). However, only two stories on climate will be analysed here, that is, “The climate change merry-go-round politics”, and “Rainfall pattern now unpredictable”.

## **6.6 “The climate change merry-go-round politics”**

### **6.6 Words and symbols**

The reporter employed words and symbols depicting a stalemate in the resolution of the climate change issue. This observation is captured in the title of the story, “*The climate*

*change merry-go-round politics*”. The caption on the picture denotes an Africa which is at the mercy of the ever changing climate as a result of pollution. “*Africa encounters human suffering, largely as a result of climate change, the major polluting nations want Africans to respond with compassion rather than question the politics of who is historically responsible for climate change*”. The picture shows an industry belching smoke into the atmosphere.

The story employed several words to inform the reader that Africa and other developing countries are bearing the brunt of climate change which is largely caused by the developed countries through their pollution of the environment. Word choice is a key tool reporters use to subtly convey bias. Words are never created equal, even synonyms vary as far as connotation. Signs and symbols in texts are deliberately selected so as to achieve particular ideological objectives. Stuart Hall, writing in his essay “Encoding/Decoding” [article was an edited extract from ‘Encoding and Decoding in Television Discourse’, CCCS Stencilled Paper no. 7], asserts that the level of connotation of the visual sign, of its contextual reference and positioning in different discursive fields of meaning and association, is the point where already coded signs intersect with the deep semantic codes of a culture and take on additional, more active ideological dimensions. The following are some of the words and phrases employed by the writer; human suffering, climate change, polluting nations, global warming, developing countries, politically binding reduction targets, shifting of goal posts, developed countries, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, ratifying the agreement legally, and the Kyoto protocol.

### **Preferred meanings**

The theme of climate change has become topical in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. All countries of the world are grappling with various challenges occasioned by climate change. The story sets an agenda for Africa to make concerted efforts in demanding financial support from the major polluters of the environment. The story “The climate change merry-go-round politics” depicts Africa as a victim of climate change. The story also shows that the climate change is not a fortuitous incident; it is actually engineered by developed countries of the world through their pollution of the environment. Furthermore, the culprits of environmental pollution which has negatively affected Africa are not being sincere in addressing the challenge; they do not want Africa to raise pertinent questions with regard to the source of the problem and possible remedies and/or recourse.



Instead of asking who is causing climate change and what kinds of methods are being used to fuel global warming, major polluting nations want Africans to ignore and abandon the historical responsibility for climate change.

*The Sunday Mail*, December 14, 2014 p.12 Extra

The story identifies the major polluters and illustrates their shenanigans in frustrating Africa with regard to financial assistance which would help the continent to effectively deal with the vagaries of climate change. Africa is urged to persist in demanding that the polluters commit themselves to assist Africa in the form of ratifying relevant treaties and helping it financially.

Major emitters such as China, the US, Russia, India, Japan, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea and South Africa announced politically binding reduction targets to be achieved by 2020.

Failure to ratify the treaty by the developed nations is frustrating progress already achieved in combating climate change effects.

Samuel Samson Ogallah of Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance says the non-committal stance of annex 1 countries to the treaty and other historical obligations accounts for the frustrations African groups and the civil society keep experiencing in various COP meetings.

*The Sunday Mail*, December 14, 2014 p. 12 Extra

The preferred meaning also in this story is that Africa will never be able to decisively deal with the climate change phenomenon due to lack of resources. The rich nations are not negotiating with Africa in good faith. This is buttressed by several statements in this story, for instance, this one; “Rich nations are squeamish about committing to extreme measures as they are feeling the global economic downturn”. What is also apparent is that conferences on climate change are simply talk shows, yielding nothing tangible for developing countries.

Conference hopping is not bringing tangible results. Even as African negotiators push their demands, tangible progress will remain elusive as major polluting countries renege on their obligations.

*The Sunday Mail*, December 14, 2014 p. 12 Extra

The foregoing statement is a wake-up call to Africa to reflect on its engagements with the developed in relation to climate change and redirect its focus and energies towards finding some local responses to climate change. The meaning embedded in the story is that South Africa is not considerate and sensitive to the plight of its fellow Africans who have to grapple with climate change challenges on a regular basis. Instead the story identifies with developed countries of Europe and Asia and ignores the pleas by other African states for the reduction of gas emissions into the atmosphere.

Considering the impact of climate change on food security, water availability and human health, it is imperative to understand why the developed countries are not treating the matter with the urgency it deserves. The story, “The climate change merry-go-round politics” does not inform the reader whether there are no international legal instruments which can be employed to compel environment polluting countries to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and cease forthwith from emitting dangerous substances into the atmosphere. What is also missing is why developed countries are treating the issue of climate change lackadaisically if the effects of climate change are similar to those of the developing countries. The media can set an agenda through omitting certain sources or information. Whereas, agenda-setting is usually apparent through emphasis, simple omission is the most ubiquitous tool employed by politicians opposed to acknowledging the threat of global climate change. One can see frequent use of this same agenda-setting-by-omission technique on local levels, such as in municipal and national levels.

According to Philo, 2008; Philo, Miller and Happer cited in Briggs (2010) the media – television, the press and online – play a central role in communicating to the public what happens in the world. In those cases in which audiences do not possess direct knowledge or experience of what is happening, they become particularly reliant upon the media to inform them. That is not to say that the media simply tell people what to think – people do not absorb media messages uncritically (Philo, 2008; Philo, Miller and Happer, in press). But the media are key to the setting of agendas and focusing public interest on particular subjects, which operates to limit the range of arguments and perspectives that inform public debate. The story, “The climate change merry-go-round politics” highlighted several valid points and arguments but limited the debate on climate change by conveniently skirting some potentially

relevant and critical information which could help the reader to comprehend the climate change theme.

However, the portrayal inadvertently expands the debate on the state of wildlife management in various countries of the continent. Readers might try to probe whether climate change effects had the same impact on both developing and developed countries. “They want Africans to think: “We are all human beings, we will suffer the same and you have a right to happiness equal to our own. So why worry about who is the biggest polluter”. The position of the developed nations with regard to the climate change challenge appears to be a subtle persuasion to developing countries to normalize the disasters associated with climate change. Assuming that the impact is the same, the reporter should have questioned why the developed countries continue polluting the environment. It was important for the story to have highlighted the economic dividend accruing to developed countries from their industries which cause pollution. Their non-compliance is a clear indication that the developed countries are working as a block to frustrate the climate change agenda which obviously should have got buy-in from the developed countries. The story gave the wrong impression that climate change is exclusively detrimental to developing countries in terms of droughts and food insecurity. The negative effects of climate change are universal, perhaps the difference is on impact, but ultimately all are affected one way or the other. Debate could have been broadened by bringing the scary picture of the effects of climate change to the international bodies like the United Nations and lobby them to persuade industrialized countries to reduce their pollution levels. Global warming is a reality, and heat waves have left victims in Europe and other parts of the world. The story had the potential of reminding the nations of the world that failure to care for the environment, for example, harming the ozone layer, results in dire negative effects on the climate.

Readers may be led to interrogate the relevance and the powers/authority of treaties such as the Kyoto Protocol in the face of recalcitrance of developed countries with regards to pollution. If the Kyoto Protocol was binding and legitimate, one would expect it to impose sanctions on defaulting states as is the case with countries which breach the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons agreements. The story should have widened the scope of the debate by querying the apparent impunity on the part of the developed countries. Considering that

developing countries are lesser polluters of the environment, it is only logical that the major polluters should bear the burden of ameliorating the effects of climate change by assisting the former with financial resources which would help them, to a certain extent, to deal with climate change challenges. Developing countries already have to contend with other challenges such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, unemployment, starvation, civil conflicts and political instability; hence the scourge of climate change would aggravate their plight. The story, “The climate change merry-go-round” could have extended the debate by interrogating the refusal by developed countries to ratify protocols whose objective is to create and foster a better world.

Ratifying the agreement legally binds rich nations responsible for industrial pollutions to cut their emissions of climate-damaging greenhouse gases under specified targets of 15 to 30 percent by 2020, and 60 to 80 percent by 2050.

Major polluting countries can either do this obligation directly or indirectly by helping developing countries with the required finance for capacity building, adaptation, mitigation and technology transfer among others.

*The Sunday Mail*, December 14, 2014 p.12 Extra

There was need also for the debate on climate change to interrogate what the developing countries, either individually or regionally, were doing to address climate change challenges even without the support of the developed countries. What is apparent is that the developed countries are not sincere about assisting developing countries financially or in reducing environmental pollution. In view of that, developing countries would obviously be expected to conceive solutions, both short term and long term, to climate change challenges. Furthermore, debate should also involve means and ways which the developing countries could employ to force developed nations “... to accept deep, mandatory carbon cuts, and pay tens of billions of dollars in aid to help poor countries combat global warming”. It would appear as if the developing countries were caught unawares by the climate change challenges, but nothing could be further from the truth. The media have been reporting on climate change over a period of time, albeit with some attendant shortcomings, for instance, bias, inappropriate genres, and exclusion of indigenous knowledge systems. Dorroh, writing for the Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA) posits that,

in the coming decades, climate change is poised to disrupt the global economy, dividing the world's regions into winners and losers. Low-income countries stand to

lose the most, yet environmental reporting around the world fails to inform the public on a level that transcends the politics of the moment. (2015: 14)

*The Sunday Mail*, December 14, 2014 p.12 Extra

Chari (2013) posits that some scholars argue that the mass media misrepresent, misinform and distort climate change issues, thus making it difficult for the public to understand climate change. “The effectiveness of big media such as television, radio and newspapers in communicating climate change issues has been questioned. Problems and issues that are close to the cultural beliefs, norms and values of a media outlet’s society get attention at the expense of other topics. Applying this framework to climate change coverage, scholars argue that climate change issues only receive media attention when they resonate well with the media outlet’s socio-cultural environment (Sharif and Medvecky, 2018). For example, a socially embedded view of ‘nature as something to be protected’ increases the amount of coverage of climate change issues, whereas a view of ‘nature as an object of control and exploitation’ lowers the priority of climate change among other social issues (Anderson, 2009:10). Thus the prevailing socio-cultural milieu helps shape the relative importance of climate change issues, debates, and policy measures, resulting in an increase (or decrease) in media representation of these issues. This, in turn, helps shape public knowledge and interest, creating a feedback loop (Anderson, 2009).

Since the story, “The climate change merry-go-round” politics is meant to set an agenda for both developed and developing countries to address the climate change challenges occasioned by the pollution of the environment, there was need to place a burden on both blocks of countries. To set an agenda by simply issuing veiled attacks on the developed countries for not financing the curbing of greenhouse gas emissions inter alia, whilst allowing developing countries just to whimper, but without mobilizing their national resources to address climate change, poses the danger of removing climate change agenda from governments’ agenda. Pralle (2009) in Fitzpatrick (2011) asserts that agenda-setting perspective can help people understand current climate policy politics by identifying factors that will help the climate change issue rise and stay high on public and governmental agendas. Inasmuch as the major polluters have a moral and financial responsibility to help to

ameliorate climate change effects, those countries bearing the brunt of climate change should be galvanized to act expeditiously to deal with the challenges.

The story gave information on the challenges of climate change obtaining in the world today. It also informed the reader about the causes of climate change and identified the culprits and why it is seemingly difficult for the challenges to be addressed by both the developed and developing countries. However, the reporter, Sifelani Tsiko limited debate by not prodding developing countries to make an effort to deal with some of the challenges using their own resources. He did not even suggest for them to pool resources together as regional blocks like SADC and address some of the challenges. The story did not inform the reader if the Kyoto Protocol could be reconfigured in the spirit of empowering it to decisively deal with those countries whose industrial activities are harming the environment.

In the second story on climate, “Rainfall pattern now unpredictable” which appeared in *The Sunday Mail* on December 7, 2014, the journalist, Pamela Nyabadza, highlights on the rainfall pattern becoming unpredictable. Expert views were sourced from the Minister of Agriculture, Mechanization and Irrigation, the Meteorological Services Department, and Mr Wonder Chabikwa of the Commercial Farmers’ Union.

## **6.7 ‘Rainfall pattern now unpredictable’**

### **6.7 Words and symbols**

In the story “Rainfall pattern now unpredictable”, the journalist employed words such as farmers, irrigation, small grain, summer cropping season, unpredictable, change of climate, variety of crops, drought resistant, allayed fears, dry land, germinate, experts, temperature, massive industrialisation and pollution, deposition of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, Kyoto Protocol, developing countries, blame, industrialised economies, food production, and flooding.

The choice of words and symbols in media texts is usually informed by the agenda or framing which the reporter wants to reinforce. The closeness, relevance and importance of the issue of climate change to every citizen of the world makes topical, hence worth reporting on. The development media theory is an apt theory for the story due to the theory's thrust of mobilising grassroots people to identify and carry out developmental projects with the media playing the role of communicating relevant information and awareness programmes. According to SARDC, the function of water in our daily lives is a topic of increasing public interest and attention. Thus there is also increasing attention by the media in covering water-related matters, and other environmental issues. However, a challenge for media practitioners when researching water issues is the problem that accessible sources of information tend to be cluttered with scientific and technical jargon. Therefore, the reporter has to deliberately and consciously select words which will serve his/her purpose. In the story 'Rainfall pattern now unpredictable', the journalist employed words such as farmers, irrigation, small grain, summer cropping season, unpredictable, change of climate, variety of crops, drought resistant, allayed fears, dry land, germinate, experts, temperature, massive industrialisation and pollution, deposition of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, Kyoto Protocol, developing countries, blame, industrialised economies, food production, and flooding.

### **Preferred meanings**

In the story 'Rainfall pattern now unpredictable', the journalist, Pamela Nyabadza, wants Zimbabweans to change their mindset concerning rainfall and farming. From the sources she quoted, reliance on rain which falls for the sustenance of farming activities would be foolhardy. People have to accept the stark truth that due to climatic changes occasioned by environmental pollution, seasons have changed, and will continue to change. In view of this, farmers will have to adapt to planting other varieties of crops, those that mature early, and those that are drought tolerant. What is apparent in the story is that frequency of drought can increase due to climate change. Cryptically, the story informs the reader and the government that the occurrence of a drought in any summer season cannot be an excuse for a famine in the country. Irrigation is presented as a panacea. "Farmers should turn to irrigation and small grain production this summer cropping season as rainfall has become unpredictable, a Cabinet minister has said".

Due to climate change effects manifesting themselves in droughts and other adversities, it is no longer prudent for farmers to solely rely on their knowledge and experiences. They now need the services of experts in the form of Agritex officials.

It is important that farmers liaise with Agritex officials to get the best on-farm operations in their areas. It is also important to realise that climate change is now a reality and therefore farmers should not completely rely on the traditional knowledge of the beginning of the main rain.

*The Sunday Mail*, December 7, 2014 p.4 Extra

Though there is an admission that the farmers have been tapping from their traditional knowledge base in their farming activities, they are now being advised to rely more on the knowledge of agricultural experts. It connotes the superiority of the knowledge of Agritex Officers over indigenous knowledge systems which the peasants have relied on over generations. Implicit in the story 'Rainfall pattern now unpredictable' is the assertion that the delay in the main rain does not necessarily result in a drought. 'The past seasons recorded delayed rains in most parts of the country, but the seasons did not necessarily end up being drought seasons'. It is also apparent in the story that climate change which has direct effects on rainfall patterns is not actually a new phenomenon. In the story it is also clear that climate change is actually caused by human activities. The story gives an impression that if the developed countries make a decision to reduce environmental pollution, the rainfall patterns could significantly improve for the better.

In 2013, the United Nations' Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that scientists were "95 percent sure" human activity was causing climate change.

While the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 obliges all signatory states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, bickering over apportioning global mitigatory measures is stalling progress.

*The Sunday Mail*, December 7, 2014 p.4 Extra

What also comes to the fore is that the challenge of climate change is not only affecting Zimbabwe but several countries within southern Africa like Malawi and Namibia. The journalist also wants the reader to know that the adverse effects of climate change are not exclusively manifested in droughts, but even in flooding as is the case with Mozambique. However, the reader may not be convinced by the storyline, may argue that the story omits critical issues such as the involvement of grassroots in the search for solutions. Like Holland and Iser, Steven Mailloux, maintains that authors communicate meanings to readers and in



this way teach readers how to read. Like Fish, he claims that different readers produce different interpretations and even different texts because diverse rhetorical conventions govern their interpretive practices.

### **Omission analysis**

In the story, 'Rainfall pattern now unpredictable', farmers are encouraged to use irrigation methods to prevent their crops from dying. What is not explained is whether the farmers have access to adequate water as well as irrigation equipment. If at all these things were available, the question would be why the country has experienced droughts and famine several times over the years. The story just lumped all the agricultural regions of Zimbabwe into one entity, thus blurring their differences, for example, rainfall and soil types. These few differences on their own would determine the varieties of crops which can be planted in the different regions of the country. In the story, the nutritional value of the small grains is not explained, though they are highly nutritious. Therefore, in light of the new post-2015 sustainability agenda, it is essential to explore the linkages between sustainable development and indigenous knowledge, intended here as local knowledge of indigenous communities having its own epistemology and scientific validity and not as opposite to western knowledge. This exploration will provide an opportunity to understand how indigenous peoples in different regions of the world have been responding to ecological and development challenges and how, because of their knowledge systems deeply rooted in local ecology, they can be valuable agents in maintaining global biodiversity and building resilience to climate change.

Considering the challenges being faced by developing countries like Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe due to climate change caused by industrial pollution, the story 'Rainfall pattern now unpredictable' could have shed light on whether the dithering by the industrialised countries on commitment to reducing their levels of environmental pollution was possibly going to be resolved. The reporter also seems to be presenting a scenario of options, that is, either the developed countries reduce levels of pollution or they fund developing countries so as to capacitate them to deal with the effects of climate change caused by industrial pollution. African can lead by example by reducing their levels of

pollution, for example, South Africa is one of the major polluters due to its high degree of industrialisation. Africa could also tap from its indigenous knowledge systems as a way of responding to rainfall pattern variations, as well as being proactive. Assuming that such options actually existed, the journalist should have expounded on it, and assist the developing countries to make informed decisions.

The story 'Rainfall pattern now unpredictable' brought to the attention of the reader to the challenges developing countries are grappling with as a result of climate change. Briggs (2005) says that, for the past two decades or so, the use of indigenous knowledge in development has become a mantra of sorts, representing one possible way of negotiating the so-called 'development impasse', or, indeed, the 'death of development'. According to Alvera (2013: 45) the main factors affecting food security in the Mbire district are rainfall amounts and distribution. Wildlife and pests also contribute to food security issues. The story touches on a very critical issue, that of change in rainfall pattern because it affects the livelihoods of communities, the national economy, health, and national security.

Since climate change is proving to be a perennial challenge to several countries of the SADC region, the story 'Rainfall pattern now unpredictable' could have invited debate on what precautionary measures Zimbabwe has taken to alleviate the impact of climate change on agriculture. The mention of irrigation sounds hollow considering that the country has experienced droughts several years but the government has not harnessed water in the dams for irrigation. There is not even infrastructure in place to ensure that peasants get water for their crops in the event of a drought occurring. "Farmers should turn to irrigation and small grain production this summer cropping season as rainfall has become unpredictable, a Cabinet minister has said". It was only logical for the journalist to probe the minister to explain whether the farmers have been capacitated to effectively deal with the effects of climate change. There was also need to investigate whether there was coordination between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Meteorological Services Department in terms of anticipating rainfall for particular seasons so that farmers could be well informed before they purchase seed and commence planting processes. This coordination is important due to the differences in definitions with reference to the drought phenomenon between agriculturalists and climate experts. Whereas agriculturalists are concerned with the even spread of rainfall

within the farming season, climate experts are concerned about the amount of rainfall in a particular season. Hence, an agricultural drought may not be the same with a meteorological drought. One of the media normative theories, that is, development media theory, posits that the media should give priorities to the coverage of those areas that touch on the lives of the people. In other words, content should be development-driven and should centre on socio-economic and political lives of the people. As Escobar (1995: 98) in Mawuko-Yevugah (2016) puts it: “[t]he remaking of development must start by examining local constructions, to the extent that they are the life and history of the people, that is, the conditions for and of change”. Such approaches can be supported by careful ethnographic work capable of teasing out the complexities of the interrelationships established between communities and places (Herbert, 2000).

Perhaps the debate could have been expanded further by considering actions being taken at international level, for example, the Kyoto Protocol. Besides adopting a blame frame, the story could also have expanded the debate by questioning why the signatories of the Kyoto Protocol were not implementing the provisions of the treaty. The story does not explain whether there is no other supreme body which can compel the signatories, even those who are not signatories but are polluters of the environment, to comply with the obligations and provisions of the Kyoto Protocol.

While the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 obliges all signatory states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, bickering over apportioning global mitigatory measures is stalling progress.

Developing countries blame industrialised economies for large-scale pollution and want them to fund anti-pollution programmes.

On the other hand, developed countries are ducking and diving.

*The Sunday Mail*, December 7, 2014 p.4 Extra

In the absence of support from developed countries to address climate change challenges, the reporter should have probed the experts and the minister to proffer alternative solutions or strategies.

Whereas the preceding story, “The climate change merry-go-round politics” focused on identifying the major polluters of the environment and persuading them to respond to the

responsibility of ameliorating the effects of climate change on developing countries; the one on wastelands places the responsibility of reclaiming wastelands squarely on Zimbabwe. The “Forward with reclamation of wastelands” story situates the environmental management discourse in the governance and business contexts.

## **6.8 “Forward with reclamation of wastelands”**

### **6.8 Words and images**

The reporter of the story “Forward with reclamation of wastelands” selected words and image which depict desolation of spaces which could be regenerated through human effort and planning so that they would be productive and beneficial for future generations. The image of a disused mine accompanying the story is symbolically a clarion call to the powers-that-be to pay particular attention to the rehabilitation of wastelands. According to Shortland and Gregory (1991) illustrations are a useful device for clarifying ideas which are difficult to express in words. Illustrations are not simply ornaments, nor are they something to be added once the text is finished. Pictures can provide a valuable break for the reader, and can bring structure and variety to the text. The reporter of the story, “Forward with reclamation of wastelands”, Andrew Mangwarara, selected words to employ in his story about restoring the environment, some of the words are; mine wastelands, environmental laws, future generations, constitution, thriving lush forest, plant species, derive some benefits, conformity to community expectations, safe and stable landscape for humans, domestic animals and wildlife, indigenous seed, and monitoring programmes.

The title of the story, “Forward with reclamation of wastelands” denotes a process which is already ongoing. In the story, it is apparent that those who were engaged in the mining activities were solely concerned about enriching themselves without planning to restore the environment. What also escaped their reasoning is that land is not an infinite resource; it needs to be well managed so that it can continue to sustain lives of growing human populations. This assertion is buttressed by the reporter; “Mined land needs to be restored for the benefit of future generations because we live on a planet that is not expanding though the

population is increasing”. Miners’ behavior and attitudes with regards to environmental management are retrogressive because they cause land degradation. Failure to rehabilitate the environment disadvantages communities living close to the disused mines, because they might have lost their livelihoods through the closure of the mine. Some could have been employees of the mining companies, with the exhaustion of the minerals; they (former employees) and their families would obviously want to find other means of survival, for example, farming. Hayes (2015) gives an example of Colwoyo’s reclamation, which is to restore the mined area to a land use capability equal or better than the land condition that existed prior to mining. In such a situation, people who could have been affected by the impact of mining activities, or the mining aftermath, can have another lease of life. The media employing the development media theory would be expected to seize the opportunity to publicize land reclamation processes and the eventual benefit of such activities to local communities. Usually, news of that nature would prefer both news genres, that is, hard news and soft news.

It is also inferred in the story that the country is quite sensitive to environmental management; this is attested to by the constitutional provisions enacted by the country’s legislature.

There are provisions set out in the Constitution of Zimbabwe for an environment that is not harmful to the health and well-being of the people, to have an environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations, in Section 73 (Chapter 4). Thus it should be a matter of principle for mined lands to be restored to their original stable states.

*The Sunday Mail*, September 21, 2014 p.6 Extra

The constitution is clear about the rehabilitation of the wastelands, that is, to be restored to their original states. It also expresses that the environment should be conducive to human habitation. What comes out clearly also there is there is no land which can be condemned that it can no longer sustain life because of some mining activities which might have taken place. To consolidate the argument, the reporter, Andrew Mangwarara gives an example of land reclamation which took place in Kenya. “The area was once a quarry wasteland used to produce cement, but today is a thriving lush forest. The then Bamburi Cement Company hired Dr Rene Haller to restore the limestone desert” (Haller, R. and Baer, S., 1994). Furthermore, the story highlights the fact that the very company which would have been

mining in a particular place is the one which has the responsibility of restoring the land to its original state.

The story also emphasizes the urgency of restoring the wastelands. Furthermore, no company is exempt from the responsibility of land restoration; both big and small companies are required to play their roles.

“Land reclamation or reformation needs to happen now rather than later. As soon as mining ceases in an area, efforts at reclamation must begin in earnest under the watchful eye of environmental agencies.

It is the responsibility of both small and large firms to restore mined land to its original state once mining is over”.

*The Sunday Mail*, September 21, 2014 p. 6 Extra

In the story, “Forward with reclamation of wastelands”, it is implied that firms have not been prompt in reclaiming land after mining activities. The story is advocating for a paradigm shift in addressing wastelands reclamation. The picture of the disused mine shows that there is still some infrastructure still in place at the former mining site. Needless to say, the existence of such elaborate infrastructure at an abandoned mining sector simply points to how negligent some of the firms can be. The reader would expect that the firm, whilst restoring the wasteland, it could also recycle the metal and sell it and direct the funds to assist in the reclamations of the wastelands. However, from the vestiges of the mining activity, it appears members are still benefiting, that is, fetching water from the taps.

### **Preferred meanings**

In the story, “Forward with reclamation of wastelands”, the reporter’s intention is to inform the reader that the miners after they have exploited and exhausted the mineral wealth underground, they are leaving the land derelict. This, they are doing, notwithstanding the existence of constitutional provisions which compel these mining firms to restore the environment to its original state after they are through with their mining activities. Mining firms are depicted as entities which are not law abiding because they flout legal provisions enshrined in the constitution. Apparently, the miners are mean; they do not want to expend their financial resources in reclaiming the wastelands. The story sought to convince the reader

that land reclamation after mining activities, though costly, it is feasible and achievable. Other countries like Kenya have done it. This is captured in the story;

Many years ago I had an opportunity to visit the Haller Park in Bamburi, Mombasa on the Kenyan coast.

The area was once a quarry wasteland used to produce cement, but today it is a thriving lush forest. The then Bamburi Cement Company hired Dr Rene Haller to restore the limestone desert. This was an almost impossible task.

Dr Haller planted 26 plant species and of these only three survived: the damas, coconut palm and Casuarina were used to colonise the area.

Many lessons can be drawn from this amazing story, which can be applied to our own Zimbabwean scenario.

*The Sunday Mail*, September 21, 2014 p.6 Extra

What the reporter also wants the readers to know is that the land reclamation is not done haphazardly; there are EMA benchmarks which need to be adhered to. This would definitely standardize the restoration of the wastelands throughout the country. The story, “Forward with reclamation of wastelands” also embraces indigenous plants in reforesting the wastelands. The story gives an impression of a restored wasteland which resembles undisturbed nature, with both flora and fauna.

Plant species diversity should be measured. The area must not be occupied by just one or two species. This allows for greater colonization by numerous animal and insect species, thereby promoting a more stable interactive ecosystem.

*The Sunday Mail*, September 21, 2014 p.6 Extra

The framing of the story “Forward with reclamation of wastelands” was done to drive home the point that authorities and entities such as EMA were allowing mining firms to exploit mineral wealth, enriching themselves, whilst destroying the environment, not reclaiming the land; then go scot-free. It is seldom to encounter a news account that explicitly presents the core argument of the frame. More commonly, an image or set of images, metaphors, catch-phrases or anecdotes carry the frame. The news frames are deliberately, and in some cases, consistently constructed equally by that which was omitted as by that which was included.

The story omitted important information in relation to the non-compliance of the mining firms with the constitutional provisions with regard to land reclamation. The reader is not informed or educated of any plausible reason why the firms are not restoring the wastelands to their original states. The constitution is quite explicit that after the mining activities, land should be restored to its original state.

There are provisions set out in the Constitution of Zimbabwe for an environment that is not harmful to the health and well-being of the people, to have an environment protected for the present and future generations, in Section 73 (chapter 4). Thus it should be a matter for mined lands to be restored to their original stable states.

*The Sunday Mail*, September 21, 2014 p. 6 Extra

In view of this provision, the reader would be curious to know why the powers-that-be have not obliged the mining firms to restore the mined spaces to their original states. The story does not tell some of the health hazards which can be caused by the unrestored lands. What is also missing is the role and relevance of the Environment Management Agency (EMA) in the face of the plunder of the environment by the mining firms. Nowhere in the story does the reporter mention of any action taken by EMA either to enforce the legal provisions or to sanction a defaulting mining firm. What are conspicuous are innuendos of complacency, negligence and incompetence on the part of the parastatal (EMA). The reporter Andrew Mangwarara does not mention on what the government could be mooting to implement the constitutional provisions, for example, to compel the mining firms to reclaim the lands. It is disconcerting to observe that the story does not elaborate on the effects of the wastes left in the environment, on human beings and other organisms. It is apparent that firms are not willing to restore the mined spaces because of the costs associated, that is, taking the Haller Park, Kenya as an example. The story should have informed the reader whether the firms ever made an effort to approach EMA or the government for a combined effort in rehabilitating some of the mined spaces considering that these companies pay corporate taxes to the government when mining is taking place. What is also missing in this story is the approximate cost of rehabilitating a wasteland. This could have given the reader, mining firms, government and EMA a rough idea of what could be budgeted for.

Furthermore, what is a bit exasperating is the reporter's omission of the relevance and importance of indigenous knowledge systems in land reclamation. Jacob Mapara posits that the acknowledgement by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development



(UNCED) that Western Knowledge systems that have been forced upon the world are not the only important knowledge systems but are representative of one side of humanity is a significant stride towards embracing and integrating other knowledges into the universal knowledge corpus. Leach and Mearns (1994: 32) in Colfer and Byron (2001) suggest that “indigenous knowledge is frequently charged with being methodically wide ... unproven populist or politically naïve; and that it generates findings that are too complicated to be of practical use to policy makers”. Often, western science and indigenous knowledge are seen as two different, competing knowledge systems, characterized by binary divide. Western science is seen as being open, systematic and objective, dependent very much on being a detached centre of rationality and intelligence, whereas indigenous knowledge is seen as being closed, parochial, unintellectual, primitive and emotional (Mitchel, 1995; Herbert, 2000). Mapara further postulates that one area that the formerly colonized bring out as an example of a field in which they have been excluded is that of environmental management. In pre-colonial Zimbabwe, indigenous knowledge ensured that there was good land use. In view of this, the reporter should have made an effort to engage and interrogate IKS and establish how it could be exploited by the mining firms, EMA, communities and the government in restoring land to its original stable state.

In the story “Forward with reclamation of wastelands”, debate was broadened in the sense that the reporter furnished information on what other countries like Kenya have done to reclaim the land which would have been left in a bad state after mining activities. Even though the reporter chose not to question what had spurred Zimbabwe legislators to enshrine in the constitution of Zimbabwe Section 73 (Chapter 4) on environment, and whether the objectives have been met or are being met, taking into cognizance the non-reclamation of wastelands, the story carried a solution frame.

However, others may contend that the framing of the story confined the debate simply to the non-reclamation of wastelands without questioning who has allowed that to continue, and why it has been allowed to continue unabated. Furthermore, the story does not identify the location of the wastelands in Zimbabwe. Recognizing that framing is another level of the agenda-setting theory, identifying the areas would assist the readers in transforming the wastelands issue from a media agenda into a public agenda which could culminate in

government agenda. The debate could have been extended to investigate whether there were no underhand deals between the mining firms and those who were charged with the responsibility of ensuring that mined spaces were restored to their original spaces. In broadening the scope of the debate, the reporter could have suggested other economic activities which could be a suitable substitution after the land has been rehabilitated. The rehabilitation is not simply aimed at closing the gullies, but to allow communities to sustainably utilize the natural resources. The story could have proffered some suggestions apart from the Kenya example. It could have explored the possibility and rationale of engaging local communities, with support from the mining firms, and employing local people's knowledge and experience to reclaim the wastelands. It is also pertinent to propose that mining firms should be educated on sustainably utilizing or exploiting natural resources so that in the process of mining they do not unnecessarily destroy the environment. Furthermore, debate could have proposed the sale of some of the infrastructure, and proceeds being earmarked for land reclamation.

The story should have taken EMA to task. It is the parastatal which was set up by government to oversee the use and management of the environment. It was mandated to penalize those who flout environmental policies obtaining in the country. In the story, there is an impression that several mining firms are destroying the environment with impunity; nowhere in the story is there information that EMA fined mining firms. Perhaps, debate should not have been limited to mining activities concerning the issue of wastelands reclamation; there are other players as well. EMA should be galvanized into action, which is, being able to monitor and evaluate the effective use of the environment so that the reclamation could be efficiently managed in a coordinated way between and among the firms, EMA, and local communities. The story "Forward with reclamation of wastelands" dealt with the need to conscientise mining firms on the need to rehabilitate land they would have disturbed through their mining activities. The analysis of the story identified the omissions which were made by the journalist and how limited debate which is negatively the potential of the story to effectively inform and educate the reader and other stakeholders in environmental management. Overallly, the story expanded debate on the issue of reclaiming wastelands.

## **6.9 Conclusion**

The chapter focused on the analysis and interpretation of environmental news which was published in *The Sunday Mail* between January and December 2014. Relevant media theories, namely, agenda-setting, development media theory, and framing were employed to help to both contextualise and conceptualise environmental reporting. In this chapter, five stories were analysed and interpreted, these are; “A giant about to vanish”, “West blocks Zim wildlife trade”, “The climate change merry-go-round politics”, “Forward with reclamation of wastelands”, and “Rainfall pattern now unpredictable”. Stories were categorised according to their themes, that is, “A giant about to vanish”, and “West blocks Zim wildlife trade” are about wildlife; welfare and trade. “The climate change merry-go-round politics”, and “Rainfall pattern now unpredictable”, have the same theme. “Forward with reclamation of wastelands” deals with the restoration of the environment to its original state after mining activities.

The first section explored the theme of wildlife conservation which includes trade in wildlife. In the story “A giant about to vanish”, the journalist, Levi Mukarati gives an account of how the jumbo is about to be driven into extinction through illegal poaching. The elephant is an asset to Africa’s tourism and its ivory is of great economic value. The story painted a gloomy picture of the future of the jumbo in Africa due to poaching which governments seem to have failed to decisively deal with. Political instability has fuelled the illegal ivory trade in East, West and Central Africa.

Experts concluded that the high levels of poaching, especially in East, West and Central Africa is facilitated by conflicts which have, through lawlessness, provided arms for illegal killing of elephants. Furthermore, highly organised criminal networks operate with relative impunity to move large shipments of ivory off the continent to Asian markets.

*The Sunday Mail*, March 9-15, 2014 In Depth p.1

The argument presented in the story is that as long as there is market for Africa’s ivory, the poaching of Africa’s wildlife will continue unabated. The ineffectiveness of international organisation like CITES which were created to oversee the conservation of the environment has actually exposed Africa’s wildlife to illegal ivory trade.

The second story in the category of wildlife management, “West blocks Zim wildlife trade” bemoans the West’s fight to block Zimbabwe from selling some of its wildlife in an endeavour to efficiently manage a lean animal population. The story questions the sincerity of the western countries and their media to embark on a campaign against Zimbabwe’s right to trade in ivory when its animal population has exceeded its carrying capacity. In justifying its decision to sell some of its wildlife, Zimbabwe asserts that failure to reduce the population would negatively affect the country’s ecosystem. The agenda-setting of the story seems to be to prod Zimbabwean authorities to push the CITES to support it in its proposed sale of its ivory, and ward off pressure and resistance from the western countries and their media.

The second section analysed stories focusing on the effects of climate change. The two stories which were analysed are; “The climate change merry-go-round politics” and “Rainfall pattern now unpredictable”. In the story “The climate change merry-go-round politics”, the reporter endeavoured to highlight how the stalemate between developed and developing countries on the need to reduce the pollution levels and support financially to ameliorate the impact of climate change, has worsened the plight of the developing countries. The second story “Rainfall pattern now unpredictable” focused on the impact of the phenomenon on agriculture. What can be derived from the story is that people have to adapt to the changes brought about by climate change because pollution of the environment is continuing unabated. It is also apparent that the major polluters of the environment, the developed world, are reluctant to reduce the impact of pollution. From the characterisation in the story, the weaknesses and ineffectiveness of international bodies like the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and treaties such as the Kyoto Protocol since they are failing to compel or convince the developed world to play an effective role in capturing the causes and effects of climate change.

The third section had a story on land reclamation, “Forward with reclamation of wastelands”. Focus was on making mining firms aware of their responsibility to restore the environment to its original state after they have exhausted the minerals they would have been mining. The story highlights that Zimbabwe is sensitive to environmental management because it even enacted a law to cater for that.

There are provisions set out in the Constitution of Zimbabwe for an environment that is not harmful to the health and well-being of the people, to have an environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations, in Section 73 (Chapter 4). Thus it should be a matter of principle for mined lands to be restored to their original stable states.

*The Sunday Mail*, September 21, 2014 p.6 Extra

It is also apparent that reporters wittingly or unwittingly limited the scope of debate on environmental reporting through their choice of words, symbols and images which they employed in the coverage. The exclusion of other words and perspectives, for agenda-setting or framing purposes, consequently affected the objectivity and completeness of environmental stories which were analysed in this chapter.

The following chapter summarised the findings of this study and concluding it. After analysing stories which appeared in the three newspapers, namely, *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail*; chapter seven will seek to evolve a framework in relation to environmental reporting.

## **CHAPTER 7: Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **7. Introduction**

The study's objective was to analyse and evaluate Zimbabwe print media's role in covering environmental issues. Environmental reporting is quite critical considering the symbiotic relationship between nature and the human race. Whilst there is an appreciation that Zimbabwe's print media were publishing environmental news, there was need for the researcher to establish the effectiveness of the coverage. The argument is that the public usually depend on the media to inform, educate and make them aware of environmental issues, be it climate change, poaching of endangered species, floods, rainfall pattern or land reclamation. In some instances, the complexity of environmental news brought about by the use of technical jargon by scientists and experts, and the attendant failure of journalists to either simplify or repackage environmental news to assist the reader to utilise the information has been another undoing of environmental reporting. Furthermore, the environmental journalists have to balance the incongruity that comes as a product of the short attention span that is affecting news consumers in a nation that unfolds around consumerism combined with the fact that environmental stories are frequently complex and difficult objectives to report. Several scholars, organisations and institutions have made valuable contributions to the theoretical corpus of environmental management, and in some instances, its coverage by the media. Risiro, J., Tshuma, D.T., and Bhasikiti, A. (2013), Nisbet, M. C. (2009), UNESCO, Boykoff, M.T. (2011), Boykoff, J.M. (2011), and Chari, T. (2013) have made immense contribution to the literature of environmental management, and environmental reporting.

The sub objectives of the study which were derived from the general objective endeavoured to satisfy several aspects of this study. Firstly, they sought to analyse Zimbabwe's print journalists' perception of environmental news. Secondly, it endeavoured to interrogate the

role of the media in reporting environmental issues. Thirdly, it endeavoured to analyse and assess possible challenges faced by journalists in covering environmental issues.

This study is a culmination of the realisation of the existing gaps in environmental news, that form of news which can proffer solutions to environmental challenges which nations grapple with on a daily basis. There is a yearning among the publics to have access to news which resonates with the views and aspirations of the grassroots people who are exposed to the negative effects of climate change and pollution. Catherine Happer and Greg Philo of Glasgow University Media Group assert that the media play a central role in informing the public about what happens in the world, particularly in those areas in which audiences do not possess direct knowledge or experience. The media shape public debate in terms of setting agendas and focusing public interest on particular subjects.

The study analysed environmental stories which were published in the three weekly newspapers which were selected for the study. *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail* provided environmental news for analysis. The selection of these three weekly newspapers was deliberate. The *Daily News on Sunday* is a privately owned newspaper which is also a tabloid, thus could likely carry the sensationalism it exhibits in political reporting into environmental reporting. *The Financial Gazette* is a business oriented newspaper which targets business executives and others with financial literacy; hence its reportage of environmental news would be critical to the study. Its coverage of environmental issues could be an acknowledgement and confirmation that environmental issues have both a direct and indirect bearing on the economies of countries. Analysis of *The Sunday Mail's* environmental reportage was essential in the sense that the weekly is a government owned publication and its biases and allegiance in terms of political news are well known and documented. Therefore, it was interesting to ascertain whether the biases and subjectivity it manifests in its reportage of other issues, particularly political and economic, are not also smuggled into the coverage of environmental issues. The possibility lurks in editorial policies and house styles. Considering that in Zimbabwe some of the environmental challenges are as a result of a breakdown in law and order, for example, the invasion of wetlands by illegal settlers by some ordinary people as well as business entities; it becomes interesting to observe and analyse how a state owned paper would cover such vices objectively.

Qualitative research method was adopted for this study. Neuman (2013: 51) posits that qualitative data come in a vast array of forms: photos, maps, open-ended interviews, observations, documents, and so forth. This study utilised the newspaper stories and pictures to understand the dynamics of environmental reporting by the *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail*. The period covered by the study is January 2014 to December 2014. What is important to note in this study is that the stories being analysed are not exclusively for Zimbabwe, environmental stories from various parts of the world and on various themes appeared in these weeklies over the twelve month period. Focusing on Zimbabwe, the year 2014 is historically and politically part of the period (2000 to 2017) which started with the advent of the government's land reform programme which saw the compulsory acquisition of white commercial farms. This exercise witnessed and continues to witness rampant plunder of the environment through indiscriminate cutting down of trees, unsustainable hunting of wildlife, invasion of wetlands and animal conservancies, and increased levels of poaching. The content analysis research technique helped in systematically analysing and evaluating the newspaper stories in a qualitative manner. In the analysis of environmental news stories, four categories were identified and employed, namely; words and symbols, preferred meanings, omission analysis, and limiting debate. To effectively analyse environmental news using these categories, critical discourse analysis came in handy. Fairclough (1995) postulates that the analysis is sensitive to absences as well as presences in texts – to representations, categories of participant, constructions of participant identity or participant relations which are not found in the text. He further avers that the media order of discourse can usefully be examined as a domain of cultural power and hegemony.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) enabled the news discourses on environmental issues to be critically analysed. The study analysed the environmental news in their various themes such as poaching, pollution, climate change and land reclamation. Reporters' choices of genres in environmental reporting, selection of news sources, choice of pictures, captions, placement of the story in the newspaper, inter alia; have both direct and indirect bearing on the decoding of texts by readers. In stories like "A giant about to vanish", the reporter even included statistics on the jumbos left on the continent as a way of buttressing his point that



unless urgent and drastic actions are taken, future generations would never see an elephant. The preferred meanings of the environmental stories were embedded in the stories. Hall posits that although there were, indeed, a number of ways in which an item of media output might be interpreted, in fact there was one way which was actually 'preferred' by the textual organisation itself. Since news is ideological, Curran and Gurevitch (1996), the issue of 'preferred' reading was a way in line with the interests and values of dominant economic and political power. CDA is quite essential in media discourse since it looks at the meaning of that which is included as well as that which is excluded. Environmental news is shaped by both the included and the omitted. For example, the exclusion of ordinary people's opinions in the reportage of environmental issues is quite conspicuous, and meanings inadvertently, can evolve. As sources of environmental information or knowledge which can be employed to ameliorate environmental challenges, ordinary people were largely ignored.

Central to this study are three media theories, that is, agenda-setting, development media theory, and framing. Agenda-setting tends to lean towards the effects theories. According to Gunther and Christen (2002) in Bryant and Oliver (eds) (2009) the overestimate of media effects is also associated with the equally widespread tendency to believe that the news media are biased against the point of view of those engaged by a particular issue, also with little or no support in evidence. As the name implies, the theory relates to media in third world nations. It favours journalism that seeks out good news, requires that bad news stories are treated with caution, for such stories could be economically damaging to a nation in the delicate throes of growth and change. McQuail posits that as the press performs its responsibilities, it must accept and carry out positive development tasks that are in line with the policies formulated by the political leadership and freedom of the press should not be at variance with economic priorities of the government and the development needs of the citizenry. The media should also give priorities to the coverage of those areas that touch on the lives of people. In other words, content should be development-driven and should centre on socio-economic and political lives of the people.

This theory is usually applied by state owned media, for example, *The Sunday Mail*. The newspaper seldom publishes environmental news which is critical of the government or other state-related entities like EMA. The environmental reportage is required to be politically and

socially correct. This is apparent in the reporting of the Chingwizi flood victims' crisis, whereas the *Daily News on Sunday* published a couple of stories on it, *The Sunday Mail* avoided the subject. There was only one letter to the editor which was written by one of the flood victims which appeared in *The Sunday Mail*. One may assume that *The Sunday Mail* avoided publishing Chingwizi stories because the crisis is an indictment on the government's lack of preparedness to deal with crises.

The framing of news, be it environmental, political or economic, is deliberately meant to advance or promote a particular decoding of media texts by readers. Defined as 'a central organising idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events...' a frame first of all offers an organisational structure and reportorial essence to an event that has no inherent meaning (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, p. 143). Environmental news is framed so as to capture and direct the focus and attention of the reader towards a particular understanding and interpretation of an event, process or phenomenon. Nisbet and Newman (2009) contend that there is no such thing as unframed information, and many readers by way of their conversations, social media use or other interactions are already effective at framing their opinions and positions, whether using frames intentionally or intuitively. Framing, it should be noted, is not synonymous with placing a false spin on an issue, although some communicators do purposively distort evidence and facts. This theory, framing, played a critical role in analysing and understanding several environmental narratives as they appeared in the three weeklies, that is, *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail*. Environmental reporters' selection of news, words for the environmental discourse, and choice of news sources who in some instances were brought in to endorse a particular perspective, all add to news framing. Analysis of various news stories which formed part of this study showed that the way environmental reporters the world over cover environmental news is almost similar, they seem to be sensitive to similar environmental news values. News stories on the illegal trade in Africa's ivory tend to have the same frame whether reported in the press in Nairobi or Harare. This observation is buttressed by Nisbet and Newman's conclusions that even as researchers have shown that specific frames of reference about climate change in news coverage and political discourse differ by country and culture (see Dirikx and Gelders 2010; Gordon, Deines and Havice 2010; Nerlich, Forsyth and Clarke 2012; Takahashi and Meisner 2012; Zamith, Pinto and Villar 2012; Dotson, Jacobson, Kaid and Carlton 2012), and with respect to various energy policies or technological solutions, the

findings of these studies tend to support a generalizable set of meanings that advocates, political leaders, and journalists tend to draw from across country setting and time.

UNEP (2006) posits that the role of education goes beyond *informing*, to *prompting* behavioural change. Education is not just a transfer of information, but also a transfer of values. This is critical considering that the generality of journalists were exposed to an education which is totally western and exhibits apparent disdain of African cultures and knowledge base.

Several environmental themes were explored in this study in an endeavour to understand as well as interrogate the way the media report environmental issues. Themes such as floods, pollution, siltation, poaching, court sentences imposed on poachers, extermination of some animal species, climate change, and land reclamation, were analysed. The way the reporters selected and employed words with the intention to create particular preferred meanings were products of the framing of stories. Furthermore, omission analyses and the limiting of debates in the stories which were analysed pointed to the agendas being set by the reporters or media houses, in some instances, the agenda-setting was apparent, and at times subtle. In analysing the environmental stories, representative stories were used, that is, according to themes. Engaging the reportage of environmental stories by the three weeklies, that is, *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail* leads to the discovery that reporters tend to avoid sourcing information or knowledge from ‘unscientific’ and ‘unprofessional’ sources in trying to proffer solutions to some of the environmental challenges, for example, climate change. Another aspect which is quite pertinent is the people’s reliance on the media for environmental news. With limited time and ability to process complex information, as people move through their daily lives trying to make sense of a constant flow of ambiguous signals, situations, and choices, people are heavily dependent on shifting cues that set the context of people’s perceptions. In this regard, both as a communication necessity and as a persuasion strategy, when experts, advocates, or journalists “frame” a complex environmental issue, they differentially emphasize specific cues relative to that complex, endowing certain dimensions with greater apparent relevance than they would have under an alternative frame (Scheufele 1999; Nisbet 2009a; Scheufele and Scheufele (2010).

This study revealed that environmental news reporting has utilised all the three media theories, though not proportionally. Agenda-setting and framing were used to a greater extent in all the three weeklies, whilst development media was used sparingly.

## **7.1 Research findings**

Environmental reporting is essentially meant to advocate for changes that would improve the quality of the planet. Reporters through environmental reporting are expected to educate and inform people about the serious state of the environment and utilise the power of the news media to advocate or lobby for changes to improve the quality of the air, water, wildlife, land and other natural resources. Pralle (2009) asserts that agenda-setting theories teach people about the most effective strategies for putting (and keeping) climate change high on the agendas of affluent democracies. To keep environmental issues such as climate change on governmental and decision agendas, it must be salient to policymakers. If there is a lapse in the reporting of environmental issues by the news media, the environmental agenda may be placed on a lower rung on the governments' priority lists.

It has become necessary for the media to report intensively on environmental issues due to a myriad of environmental challenges confronting almost every country in the world. Risiro, Tshuma and Bhasikiti (2013) state that the recent decades have been characterised by massive destruction of biodiversity due to rapid industrialisation, urban expansion and population pressure on land. The rapid industrial expansion meant more resources such as minerals, timber and animal products. The environmental degradation has seen various international conferences aimed at protecting the environment yet the destruction of biodiversity is continuing at an unprecedented pace. Environmental reporting by Zimbabwe's print media was not confined to environmental issues obtaining in Zimbabwe. Stories like "A giant about to vanish" which appeared in *The Sunday Mail* had a continental outlook; it highlighted the poaching problems being encountered by countries in West and Central

Africa. The study showed that environmental challenges confronting the world are not naturally induced; they are largely the works of human acts or negligence.

Two questions which were derived from the study's research objectives were posed in an endeavour to establish whether environmental news was appropriately covered;

The first question was:

**Do Zimbabwe's print media give prominence to environmental news?**

In response to this question in the analysis of the *Daily News on Sunday* on the coverage of environmental news, the study established that this media house did not give equal prominence to environmental issues as is the case with other genres like politics, economics or sport. Apparently, there was not even a single story on environmental news on the front page of the *Daily News on Sunday* in spite of the pervasive nature of environmental issues to humanity. Placement of news story, to a certain extent, demonstrates the importance the editor attaches to a particular topic or story. Analysis of environmental news which included the plight of Chingwizi flood victims, cyanide poaching, how culling saves animals, climate change, and the threat to wetlands; showed that generally, the stories lacked completeness, balance and objectivity. When flood victims raised the challenges they were experiencing at the camp, for example, lack of food, water, health facilities and schools, the reporters did not take government authorities to task to explain how the government was planning to solve the problems. This was a result of the reporters' failure to probe further for more information from some of the news sources. Unfortunately, the reader is left uninformed because of this laxity on the part of the journalists. Environmental news is expected to inform, educate and raise awareness among communities. According to Robert Cox (2010) environmental communication structures people's perception of the world, mediates beliefs, attitudes and behaviours related to environmental problems. And as environmental issues affect a community or sometimes the whole society, environmental communication easily forms a public sphere, for example, room for public debate.

The framing of environmental news in the *Daily News on Sunday* goes to show that the judiciary system might be oblivious of the danger posed to the environment by poaching

activities. Besides negatively affecting the country's ecosystem, poaching of wildlife impacts negatively on the national economy because the tourism industry largely thrives on wildlife such as elephants. In the story "Cyanide poaching: Pair acquitted", the reporter seemed content with the court judgement because there was no querying the rationale of acquitting the duo which was alleged to have the cyanide chemical in their poaching activities resulting in the death of 100 jumbos. Furthermore, the *Daily News on Sunday* could have carried an editorial on the menace posed by poachers to the welfare of both humans and animals. Harris, Leiter and Johnson (1992) assert that an editorial speaks for the newspaper. The editorial section is generally recognised and accepted as the editor's (owner's) platform or soapbox. The editor has the same liberty to voice an opinion as the reader has to reject it.

It is also clear that the *Daily News on Sunday*'s environmental news is replete with the blame frame as opposed to a solution frame. The framing of news is critical because it can galvanise people or policy makers into taking particular actions or simply to ignore certain things. Entman (1993) posits that, most importantly the presentation of reality through the media could lead audiences to have different reactions in how they evaluate a problem. The way journalists present and frame issues impacts public understanding and policy formulation (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Even subtle differences in coverage can alter the way people understand problems and thus their level of support for public policy (Gandy, Koop, Hands, Frazer, & Phillips, 1997). To demonstrate the newspaper's seriousness on environmental reporting, the reporters should have framed stories in such a way that both the reader and the policymaker could have an idea of how to solve some of the environmental challenges. By simply blaming the government or any other person or entity for not curbing poaching or the invasion of wetlands may inadvertently cause people to resign to fate, which is intrinsically wrong and retrogressive. To accentuate the newspaper's (*Daily News on Sunday*) lack of total commitment to giving prominence to environmental news; a juxtaposition of the environmental stories and political stories which were published in 2014 would provide a clue. The newspaper carried many incisive political stories as opposed to environmental news which is far spaced between issues. Another role of the media is to set an agenda which citizens, government and other stakeholders can advance in environmental management, however, the *Daily News on Sunday*, did not effectively set an agenda.

*The Financial Gazette* also covered environmental stories but like the *Daily News on Sunday*, no environmental story appeared on the front page. The environmental themes which were covered are almost similar to those of the *Daily News on Sunday*, that is, wetlands, poaching, and pollution. Even though *The Financial Gazette* did not publish environmental news on the front page, the paper has two sections which are dedicated to environmental news, that is, TRAVEL & TOURISM, and National News. Furthermore, the newspaper has a reporter who specialises in environmental stories, that is, Shame Makoshori, on the TOURISM & TRAVEL desk. Other reporters alternate on National News. The framing of news in stories such as “Tracking the presidential herd” serves two meanings of prominence, that is, the importance the newspaper attaches to the conservation of wildlife, particularly the jumbo; and secondly, the value the president of Zimbabwe gives to environmental issues, to the extent that he had to select and anoint a herd of elephants to ensure that they are not hunted or culled.

The agenda-setting which is apparent with regard to the role the judiciary should play in assisting the combating of poaching is highlighted in the story “Govt losing war on poaching” which appeared in *The Financial Gazette* of 4-10 September 2014. Though the story is tacked on page 4 of the newspaper, the thrust of the story on its own demonstrates that the media house is concerned about environmental issues. It is important to recognise the fact that the prominence given to environmental issues in the media has raised consciousness among stakeholders on the need to urge the judiciary to impose stiffer penalties on poachers; this would act as a deterrent. Pralle (2009) postulates that an agenda-setting perspective can help readers understand current climate policy politics by identifying factors that will help the climate change issue rise and stay high on public and governmental agendas. This assertion applies to all environmental matters. It should be noted that according prominence to an issue may not be solely shown by the placement of the story in the newspaper or the frequency of the publication of the stories; but how the stories are written to set an agenda for the public or government, how the framing influences perceptions and actions, or whether the newspaper captures the developmental aspects of news as espoused by the development media theory.

*The Sunday Mail* accorded some degree of prominence to environmental news. One of the environmental news stories, “A giant about to vanish” appeared on page 1 of the In-Depth

section of *The Sunday Mail*. Furthermore, the weekly can even have more than two environmental news stories in one issue, and this goes to show how much value the media organisation accords to environmental issues. As in the other two weeklies, *The Sunday Mail* also gave prominence to environmental news by accompanying some of the stories with relevant photographs. Curran and Gurevitch posit that these photographs which accompany texts help to give a richer meaning to a story. They say that in understanding such images we bring a number of frameworks to bear, a number of discourses which help to organise meaning.

Prominence of environmental news is also shown by the variety of environmental news stories published in *The Sunday Mail*. Stories on the imminent decimation of the elephant population, western world's resistance to Zimbabwe's desire to sell its elephant calves notwithstanding CITES' approval, the challenges of climate change, and land reclamation were published. However, the blame frame which informs stories on the poaching of elephants and other wildlife, and land degradation caused by mining activities, whilst absolving authorities of their responsibility to ensure that the environment is well managed. For instance, government's failure to engage miners to restore the land to its original stable state after they have exhausted the minerals is purely ineptitude on the part of the government and EMA.

**The second question of the study was:**

**What are the perspectives/themes in the coverage of environmental issues by Zimbabwe's print media?**

The three weeklies basically covered stories to do with climate change, pollution, poaching, land degradation, reluctance on the part of the developed countries to help address environmental issues such as pollution of the atmosphere of which they (developed countries) are the major culprits, weak policies, and corruption on the part of some authorities which has resulted in the invasion of wetlands.



The framing of environmental news in the *Daily News on Sunday* on the above mentioned themes mostly exposed the laxity on the government's part to decisively deal with environmental challenges confronting the country. The story "Lingering hardships after Tokwe-Mukorsi floods" denotes a government which lacks foresight, dishonest and is not sensitive to the plight of the flood victims. The insensitivity of the government is explained by its failure to put in place basic amenities such as clean water, health centre, and schools despite the fact that the flood victims have been at the camp for quite some time. Government officials' failure to provide a clear plan of how the government intends to solve the Chingwizi crisis is captured in the story and serves to depict a dysfunctional system. Another story on Chingwizi crisis "Flood victims struggle to adjust to camp conditions" exposes the government's ineptitude and insensitivity as international organisations such as Unicef took up what is supposedly government's responsibility, that is providing water to the flood victims. The analysis of these stories, to a certain extent, shows that privately owned media like the *Daily News on Sunday* can be more hard hitting when it comes to the government's shortcomings in any area as opposed to the state media, for example, *The Sunday Mail*. McChesney cited in Thomas and Nain (2004) says this is hardly surprising since the media prefer passive, depoliticised, unthinking consumers to those who question the "light escapist entertainment" menu presented to them (McChesney, 1998). As opposed to the state owned *The Sunday Mail* which avoided publishing a story on the plight of the Chingwizi crisis, the *Daily News on Sunday* made an effort to highlight the plight of the victims.

The agenda-setting which informs the story "Cyanide poaching: Pair acquitted" seems to buttress the point that the government had not awakened to its responsibility of safeguarding the continued survival of wildlife through instituting laws which would help the judiciary to impose punitive sentences on arrested poachers and those who sell the ivory illegally. Furthermore, the government is being prodded, though in a subtle way, to spruce up its police force. The impression given by the story is that some members of the police force are conniving with the poachers in the illegal activities; hence government cases are simply collapsing in courts. Implied in the story, is the observation that the judiciary may need some conscientisation on the need to mete out penalties which are commensurate with the gravity of the matter; poaching activities, apart from destroying wildlife, they prejudice the national fiscus of valuable revenue. The story "Climate change fight must involve media" sets the agenda for governments of Africa to engage the media in the fight against the effects of

climate change. It is framed in such a way that the reader can easily conclude that the governments are leaving out or marginalising the media in addressing climate change issues. Considering the crucial role the media can play in terms of informing, educating, and bringing about awareness of climate change challenges and possible solutions, African governments can simply ignore the media at their own peril. Implied in the story is the homogenised ignorance on the part of African governments with regards to how the media can proffer ideas on how to ameliorate the effects of climate change among the citizens of the continent.

Reportage of environmental news in *The Financial Gazette* was largely on the wetlands, the presidential herd, tree species under threat, poaching, and siltation of Lake Chivero. The framing of *The Financial Gazette* stories are more inclined to the tourism aspect; that is, how the poor management of the environment impacts negatively on tourism. For instance, the story “Timber industry in doldrums” where the blame frame was employed highlights how the poor management of the forests has largely impacted on the industry and other downstream industries. Statistics which were given in the story, that is, drop in export earnings by 68%, from US\$34,9 million in 2005 to US\$11,3 million in 2012, are meant to consolidate the fact that the government is clueless about the economic conditions of the country. The mention of the drop in employment rate serves to show how the state is indifferent to the welfare of its citizens. Simultaneously, the framing of the story engages the government to revisit its economic priorities in view of the imports it is now making of products the country used to export. The country can no longer produce paper and paper products, matches, charcoal and wattle extracts. The story denotes a country whose economy is sliding down. Furthermore, the story shows that the challenges of the timber industry are as a result of the break down in law and order in the country whereby people now invade other people’s properties with impunity in the name of land reform programme.

In the story “Wetlands under new threat”, what is apparent is that the EMA and the government are not quite conscious of the importance of wetlands to the environment. It is also clear that both the state and EMA are ignorant of the long-term effects of the invasion of wetlands by both individual citizens and business entities. The story was framed in such a way that citizens would question the government’s priorities as well capability to safeguard

and guarantee a clean environment for both the current and future generations. In the same breath, the story is meant to set an agenda for the government to decisively deal with the invasion of wetlands. Failure to do so, would give credence to the suspicions that there could be some corruption in the permitting of businesses like Longcheng to build on a wetland close to the National Sports Stadium in Harare. The story seeks to accentuate the fact that EMA is not effective or is not adequately capacitated to efficiently manage environmental issues since there seems to be no respite to the invasion of wetlands because apart from the Longcheng complex, a service station was also constructed on a wetland near Mukuvisi River. The connotation is that there are forces which emasculate EMA either for financial or political reasons.

The analysis of *The Sunday Mail's* environmental news was on climate change, environmental pollution, wastelands reclamation, wildlife trade, and poaching. The poaching theme is framed in the newspaper in such a way that the reader is left wondering why African governments have not expeditiously addressed the issue. The statistics which are given of elephants which have been killed are quite alarming; only a tenth of five million elephants which used to roam Africa now remain. As one is presented with these statistics and facts, it is obvious that one can conclude that the fight against poachers is a lost battle. It is also apparent in the analysis of these environmental stories that African governments were not doing enough to stem the poaching tide. Furthermore, environmental stories in *The Sunday Mail* show that most of the environmental challenges are man-made, and citizens and governments have the responsibilities of finding solutions to those challenges. "A giant about to vanish" story brings to the fore the need to involve communities in environmental management.

The framing of the story "Rainfall pattern now unpredictable" shows that the Zimbabweans should have a paradigm shift; from solely relying on rainfall for agricultural activities to an extensive use of irrigation for crops. The story sets an agenda for the government to exploit water in the dams for irrigation purposes which obviously would transform the fortunes of Zimbabwe, that is, from being a victim of drought due to the change in rainfall pattern into a self sufficient country in terms of food. Embedded in the story is the government's lackadaisical approach to the climate change phenomenon which culminates in unstable and unpredictable rainfall patterns. Whereas the three weeklies published almost similar stories in

terms of themes, for example, poaching activities and invasion of wetlands, *The Sunday Mail* published a supposedly different theme, that is, reclamation of wastelands. Whilst setting the agenda for the government to enforce the provisions of Section 73 (Chapter 4) which compels miners to restore the land to its original stable states, the story questions why the government and other stakeholders have watched and let land go to waste when it is a finite resource. The three weeklies in their coverage of environmental news have given the impression that environmental issues are unique in the sense that they could only be addressed through the use of western knowledge systems. Even stories such as “Forward with reclamation of wastelands” which obviously have that room for local communities to assist in land reclamation whilst employing local communities knowledge and experience; are cast in a western sphere of knowledge and solutions have to come from ‘modern environmental science’. Reporters, overtly avoid employing development media theory in the coverage of reclamation of wastelands. By so doing, not only in this story, but in the coverage of environmental news by the three weeklies, they (print media) have successfully managed to alienate nature from humanity. Another disturbing element is the capture of the media by the executive to such an extent that *The Sunday Mail* shuns reporting environmental news which might be perceived as anti-establishment. For instance, the invasion of plantations and wetlands by party functionaries or supporters in the name of land reform is generally excluded in the media, when it is covered; it is usually in a patronising manner.

## **7.2 Conclusions on environmental reporting by Zimbabwe’s print media**

The study on the reporting of environmental news has established that the three weeklies, that is, *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette* and *The Sunday Mail* have covered various environmental themes with the intent to inform, educate and bring awareness on the state of the environment to readers and policy makers. Themes such as pollution, poaching, invasion of wetlands, culling of game park animals, sale of ivory, climate change, floods, change of rainfall pattern and destruction of plantations informed most of the published stories by the three weeklies. All the three weeklies in their coverage of environmental news sought to highlight the importance of the environment to human existence. Inasmuch as all the three weeklies reported environmental news, they tended to have their biases, for example, *The Financial Gazette*, being a business paper, mostly reported on the environment in relation to the tourism industry. The *Daily News on Sunday*, to a larger extent, employed the blame

frame; the government and entities like EMA were not doing enough to address the environmental challenges confronting the country. *The Sunday Mail* in its coverage of the environment was a bit cautious in ensuring that its environmental news does not present the government in bad light, particularly when reporting on issues to do with the invasion of plantations and wetlands. This is so, because these invasions are rooted in the land invasions which started in 2000 when the government embarked on the land reform programme.

In reporting environmental issues, the thrust or focus of all the three weeklies was to bring awareness on environmental issues and to galvanise the government and other stakeholders to be sensitive to environmental challenges, and to galvanise them into action to expeditiously address the challenges. The agenda-setting by the media is meant to prod governments and stakeholders to keep environmental issues on their agendas, to give it salience. According to Chyi and McCombs (2004) an underlying assumption of agenda-setting theory is that once an object appears on the media agenda, the volume of cumulative news coverage increases salience. During any news event's life span, the news media often reframe the event by emphasizing different attributes of the event – consciously or unconsciously – in order to keep the story alive and fresh. For example, the reporting of the story of the killing of elephants by poachers using cyanide was given some degree of salience over a period of time.

In the analysis of the stories published in the three weeklies, it was pleasing to note that the covering of environmental issues was not confined to Zimbabwe's environmental challenges, but also touched on continental and international environmental matters. This is quite significant in the sense that solving some of the environmental challenges would require concerted efforts from several countries that might be facing the same challenges, for instance, the illegal ivory trade which happens to affect Zimbabwe, Kenya and other African countries. Furthermore, this coverage helps other countries to draw examples of dealing with environmental challenges from other countries. The story "Forward with reclamation of wastelands", *The Sunday Mail* reporter Andrew Mangwarara cited Kenya's Bamburi Cement Company which hired Dr Rene Haller to restore the limestone desert. Since Zimbabwe's EMA is grappling with the problem of miners, who after exploiting the minerals, are not making an effort to restore the land to its original state; the Kenyan example could help EMA and the mining companies.

The coverage of environmental stories by the three weeklies also provides insight into the challenges developing countries like Zimbabwe have to contend with in their efforts to utilise their natural resources for national development. Game parks like the Hwange National Park are struggling to cater for the wildlife in that park due to increased populations of animals vis-à-vis the available food and water. Ironically, the government's efforts to cull some of the animals were being resisted by some western countries and Kenya who were failing to realise how it would help Zimbabwe maintain a robust wildlife management. It is also important to note that environmental news reporting by the three weeklies did not trivialise environmental issues as is the case with other genres, for example, political communication. The environmental news which was published was critical for the welfare of wildlife, other natural resources, human beings and national development. News was about making the planet a better place by addressing issues to do with pollution which results in river siltation or global warming. However, the three weeklies did not thoroughly investigate the forces and motive(s) behind the invasion of wetlands; whether it is for political mileage, corruption, break down of law and order, or desperation on the part of the populace reeling under the challenges of unemployment.

The coverage of the environment also brought to the fore the need to involve media in environmental issues. Since the media are the ones with the role and capacity to reach the masses, governments and the international community with information on almost everything taking place in the world, it is critical that they be brought on board by governments, international bodies like the United Nations into trying to find solutions to global environmental challenges like global warming, land degradation and illegal trade in ivory. It is also gratifying to see journalists acknowledging that they need training so as to adequately and professionally cover environmental news. There is this realisation as well as recognition that environmental reporting is a specialised area which is very important, hence it needs to be staffed by well trained journalists.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

After analysing the news stories which were published by the three weeklies, that is, *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail*; some deficiencies in terms of content and slant were noticed, hence the following recommendations are being made:

- The *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail* need to revisit their news values and give prominence to environmental news considering the importance of the environment to human existence.
- The three weeklies need to employ investigative journalism in environmental reporting so that journalists do not dwell on surface meanings based on what news sources give, but should interrogate information given so as to give readers factual, balanced, objective and complete environmental news stories.
- Future studies in environmental reporting must broaden the scope of study by including daily newspapers and the electronic media such as radio and television since the weeklies get more congested with weekly news thus leading to the marginalisation or omission of other genres, for example, environmental news.

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## **ADDENDUM**

The following newspaper cut-ups are for the three weeklies, that is, *Daily News on Sunday*, *The Financial Gazette*, and *The Sunday Mail*. The news stories cover the period between January and December 2014.

### *Daily News on Sunday*

1. “Lingering hardships after Tokwe Mukorsi floods” 4.1

Godfrey Mtimba  
in MASVINGO

# Lingering hardships after Tokwe Mukorsi floods

**W**ITH their parents' belongings scattered by the roadside, children of school going-age play cheerfully in the mud as if everything is normal. Barefooted and dry-lipped, they hop in a pool of stagnant water and plaster their faces with mud, oblivious of the dangers of water-borne diseases.

These are children of villagers who were forcibly evicted from their homesteads in the Tokwe Mukorsi flood basin and left exposed to the vagaries of weather at Muzvidziwa Bus Stop, about 85km along the Masvingo-Beitbridge highway.

They have been cut off schooling by the evacuation of their parents following flooding, that has also destroyed some of the villagers' homesteads.

"We no longer go to school at all, our uniforms and books were swept away in the floods," said Netsai Muhamba, a Grade Five pupil, who was granted permission to speak to the *Daily News on Sunday* by her mother, Rebecca.

"We have been here in the open for the past four days. We see our schoolmates passing by, but we cannot go anymore because anytime we can be moved to another place. We do not know if there are any schools at the places where our parents will be resettled."

*Apart from losing property*

week said government was mobilising resources and food while he begged NGO's to assist.

"The government through relevant ministries is mobilising resources to adequately resettle these people properly. We are going to see that no one will starve so the Treasury will be releasing funds to cater for everything including funds," Chombo said.

He said the government would increase its fleet from 15 to 40 vehicles while the Air Force of Zimbabwe (AFZ) will increase the number of helicopters and boats. Helicopters are assisting to air lift some villagers whose homesteads were marooned as heavy rains continue to pound Masvingo province.

Apart from challenges of limited vehicles to ferry the villagers, government was also facing a severe crisis of fuel shortage for

rights-groups in Masvingo have lambasted the government for dumping villagers by the road side.

Officials with the Community Tolerance, Reconciliation and Development, (Cotrad) said the move by government to dump villagers in the open was a gross violation of basic human rights.

"By dumping the villagers in the open, government has violated the right to shelter on these people," said Zivanai Muzorodzi, Cotrad spokesperson. "Their children's right to education has also been tampered with and also the right to food. These people are starving and government should be castigated for human rights violations

during its course of evacuating people from the flood basin."

He said the confusion surrounding the evacuation shows poor planning on government's part as most of the villagers were supposed to be relocated several years ago but funds to compensate them were allegedly diverted by government officials.

Engineers constructing the dam said floods were caused by large volumes of water that were forced to seep through the dam wall that is still under construction due to unusual above normal rainfall received his year in the province.

The province normally received 450mm of rainfall but this year it has surpassed to over

850mm.

The floods have posed danger to people living in Ngundu, Gororo, Triangle and Nyahombe.

When completed Tokwe-Mukorsi is set to be the country's largest inland water body with a capacity to hold 1.8 billion cubic litres of water and will measure 89m.

The main dam is being constructed by an Italian company Salin Impregilio on a total cost of \$155 million.

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Apart from losing property, some lost their livestock, while others were evacuated with nothing but the clothes they were putting on.

They have no food and are surviving on bread alone.

Government has since sent an SOS to the international community, non-governmental organisations (NGO's) and humanitarian aid groups to assist.

Elizabeth Pikirai, who was evacuated from Jahwa Village in Chivi, said her family was in a dire situation and complained of nagging hunger and lack of shelter.

"We were just dumped here and as you see, we are living in the open," said Pikirai.

"No shelter for my children and they are exposed to the harsh weather that is of heavy rains pounding us on a daily basis. I am afraid my children will not escape any outbreak of diseases as a result of this."

Government says it needs to evacuate and relocate over 4 000 families, which is about 20 000 people, and require \$9 million dollars to carry out the project.

Kudakwashe Bhasikiti, Masvingo provincial minister of State, said government was frantically looking for resources to evacuate the villagers.

"Government is frantically looking for the required funds to carry out this important exercise," Bhasikiti said. "Actually, we need about \$9 million dollars to evacuate and compensate the villagers and treasury will soon be availing the resources."

The disaster at Tokwe Mukorsi has since been declared a State disaster by President Robert Mugabe.

Local Government minister, Ignatius Chombo who visited the stranded villagers earlier last

its fleet.

But villagers expressed concern over empty promises from government ministers and Zanu PF officials.

"The ministers are coming here on a daily basis, one after the other but they just leave their empty promises to us," said Memory Maguraushe.

"They are saying government would release funds soon for us to have proper shelter and buy food but a week has passed and we haven't received anything."

Our families are starving and children are not going to school but they continue to pile lies on us, its really bad."

Local



Images of villagers at Chingwizi camp after their displacement from Tokwe-Mukorsi basin following floods. Some youths have now lost hope because of living an idle life at Chingwizi Farm. *Daily News on Sunday, March 23, 2014 P.B.*

**Margaret Chinowaita**  
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS EDITOR  
mchinowaita@dailynews.co.uk

**FOUR** young men sit on a rock with their eyes fixed on the dry plains of Chingwizi transit camp.

Their hopes of a bright day quickly fade as reality hits them. Each day they rise to hopelessness.

"We feel like we are in jail at this settlement," said Tinaashe Chinema, 30. "We cannot do any work and we cannot go anywhere. This is frustrating and I cannot sleep in the afternoon because of the heat."

Chinema is among hundreds of young men at the transit camp who were recently brought here because their homes were washed away in the Tokwe-Mukorsi dam flood basin.

There are thousands of flood victims here. And they look miserable as they ponder their next move. Together with village mates Johnface Mazunguye, 25, Abel Mazunguye, 18 and Munyaradzi Masunda, 42, are bitter at how nature has changed their lives.

They say they used to live a real life. They used to own gardens, livestock and were proud owners of maize fields.

Also they had their own houses, blankets, food and borcholes. Now they have nothing and have to look to donors and well-wishers for everything, from mealie-meal, salt to relish. It is Sam at Chingwizi transit camp and it already feels like midday due to the sweltering heat. Villagers in

the camp have been up early with most of them joining queues for food, clothing and water rations. Long winding queues are forming as the villagers access their daily supplies.

A number of men are seen sitting under trees as they chat away or simply stare oblivious of what is happening in the camp.

As we wander around the camp, we are drawn to the water queue where women are ready to receive the precious liquid being delivered by a Unicef bowser.

And as the women push and shove in anticipation of quickly getting to the water tap, two men labour to marshal the queue.

Water here is scarce and the women cannot hide their frustration at the meagre rations they are receiving which they believe is not enough for their household needs.

"It's not that we are not grateful for the water we are receiving, but some of us have more than six children and the two buckets we are receiving per day are not enough to cater for all our needs," said Chipso Masikati, 39.

While a number of borcholes have been sunk around the camp, the villagers complain that the water is salty and not fit for human

consumption. Some of the villagers are instead using this borehole water for other uses, with a few only drinking it when in dire need. The unavailability of clean drinking and cooking water has forced some women to travel several kilometres to farm compounds outside the estate to fetch the precious liquid.

And the queues never seem to end as, barely a few metres away, other women are queuing to receive porridge rations, while others queue to receive second-hand clothing.

Inside the camp, volunteers and officials are always busy running up and down from the coordination centre where donors arrive with different supplies.

An Econet booster proudly stands at the coordination centre as those in the camp communicate with the outside world.

Going around the camp, one would have a foreboding sense of helplessness.

**HAVE YOUR SAY**  
TO comment on this report send your SMS to: 0772470058 or: 07744398407 or: 0774170553

Kudakwashe  
Blasikiti,  
the minister of  
State for  
Masvingo

# Flood victims struggle to adjust to camp conditions

Province, said some villagers are being diagnosed with stress-related illnesses at the clinic. He said villagers were used to working in their fields but now there is nothing much to do.

Some villagers engage in work around the camp, digging and helping around, but this is not enough to occupy them.

Some men have taken to drinking opaque beer, sold for a dollar in the camp and according to them, the beer is meant to relieve stress.

A woman called Chipso Madhura died at the camp last week, her husband, Philip Hambure was engrossed in grief saying he did not know where he would bury his wife.

"Our home was swept away by the flood in Tokwe-Mukorsi so I cannot bury her there. I cannot also bury her in this camp because it is not proper," he said. "I will ask her relatives to bury her at their place."

Hambure said his wife did not complain of any pain or health complications before her death but just frothed on the mouth before she died.

Some enterprising villagers have taken to selling vegetables down to villagers.

Besides the food crisis, life was dreary in the camp. Villagers complained of long hours at meetings with village heads. The authorities advise village heads on developments and then this is cascaded down to villagers.

Pictures: Margaret Chinowaita



dailynews

SUNDAY, JANUARY 12, 2014

NEWS

www.dailynews.co.zw

# Cyanide poaching: Pair acquitted

**Jeffrey Muvundusi**  
In Bulawayo

**T**WO suspected elephant poachers in the on-going cyanide saga that saw more than 100 elephants at the Hwange National Park being killed last year have been acquitted.

Clever Khumalo, 44 and Sipho Mafu, 54 were found not guilty when they appeared before a Bulawayo regional magistrate Sikhumbuzo Nyathi last Friday.

Khumalo and Mafu had pleaded not guilty to four charges of violating the Environmental Management Agency and Parks and Wildlife Acts.

In acquitting the two, magistrate Nyathi said there was no evidence linking the two to the State allegations of poisoning elephants and possession of ivory.

The said ivory could also not be

produced in court as an exhibit. Nyathi also cited lack of corroboration in statements put forward by witnesses who gave conflicting evidence.

The state had alleged that sometime in July last year the two accused persons together with Mthandazo Tshuma who is still at large, killed unspecified elephants using cyanide before dehorning them and taking their tusks.

Sanelisiwe Dube, 31 whose whereabouts were not stated in the case was assigned by the accused persons to help acquire cyanide for their mission.

Dube reportedly went to her former workmate only identified as Buzuzu who was working at NFS Chemicals where she acquired a drum of cyanide without necessarily following the requirements, the court was told.

The State further alleged that

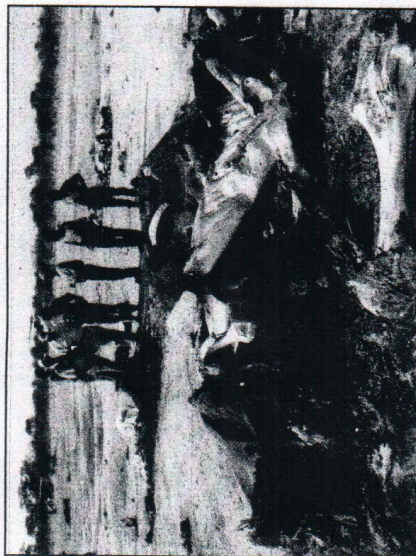
Dube later supplied the chemical to Khumalo who then passed it on to Mafu and Tshuma.

The deadly chemical was later poured into different animal watering holes as well as into the grazing lands in the Hwange National Park. This led to a number of elephants succumbing to the poison.

They allegedly took a total of 22 tusks weighing 249 kg which they transported to Harare for sale to potential clients.

Khumalo was reportedly intercepted by Harare detectives while on his way to deliver the ivory to an unnamed buyer but was later released under unclear circumstances.

Meanwhile, the court also acquitted the five detectives from Harare who had spent three months in remand prison, after the court failed to gather any incriminating evidence against them.



Government officials inspect remnants of elephants killed by cyanide poisoning.

The detectives were facing fraud charges after demanding a bribe from Khumalo whom they nabbed with a vehicle carrying ivory.

The detectives included Assistant Inspector Alois Gakata, Wellington Jena, Shadreck Rore, Donald Dube and Chrispen Musonza.



#### 4. "How culling saves animal" 4.4

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Daily News on Sunday March 30, 2014 p. 8

## How culling saves animals

**IT IS easy to criticize zoos and aquariums when healthy animals are culled, particularly when they are from endangered species.**

It's not always easy to understand the logic behind such a decision, but to get a picture of why good zoos take particular actions, one has to understand the context and the alternatives.

Wild populations of animals are collapsing at an alarming rate. Since 1997, for example, the population of giraffes in Africa has plummeted by more than 50 percent, with two subspecies becoming extinct in the wild, and leaving only 240 members of another subspecies in a single population centre. This pattern is replicated all over the world; it is driven by our increasing need for natural resources such as palm oil, agricultural land, or living space.

Animal reserves in the most vulnerable areas are struggling to protect their animals from the scourge of poachers, while other habitats are destroyed by the effects of deforestation and increasingly climate change, a problem that all of the world's governments acting in concert have been unable to check even slightly.

Indeed, governments have been unable even to uphold their obligations under the Aichi Targets to assist in the protection of endangered species and to teach their populations about the value of biological diversity, obligations that have been almost entirely out-sourced to zoos and museums.

Zoos inherited a legacy of animal keeping from a previous age that did not understand the havoc we are wreaking on the planet. Since the establishment of national and regional zoo associations and the dawning of greater scientific understanding of our effect on nature, zoos have become essentially a last line of defense in the protection of animals.

Our choice then is clear: Do we use the legacy we inherited to protect animals from human activity, or do we leave them to take their chances, knowing that their chances of survival are slim and for many species almost impossible?

If we accept that some action is better than none, then we also have to accept that managing viable populations of animals over the long term until their habitats are stabilised requires some difficult decisions, including the culling of healthy animals that won't help the species stay adaptable and immune to disease.

It's worth remembering that some of the world's foremost biologists, population biologists, animal geneticists and other experts have thought deeply and philosophically about these choices. Faced with the alternatives, it's not hard to see why they chose as they did.


Say we did stop zoos from breeding and transformed them into "sanctuaries": Immediately we would need to give up the notion that we can save our most endangered species from extinction — the infrastructure in the wild just isn't there for some species and in many Eaza zoos we care for species that are already extinct in the wild. Next we would need to decide what to do with the animals: Should we keep them in these new sanctuaries, unable to breed, until they die?

Animal rights organisations would like to make sure that nobody enjoys seeing such animals and learning about them from zoo visits, yet these visits are what pay for everything we do, from education through to conservation. Over 1,5 billion visits will be made to Eaza zoos during the Decade of Biodiversity, with all of those visitors learning about nature. Who would be there to offer nature conservation education if zoos did not exist?

Zoos in reputable zoo associations worldwide are the fourth largest donors to conservation in the wild; are animal rights groups going to replace the hundreds of millions of dollars that zoos currently donate? No, because ultimately they do not care whether species have a future in the wild.

We cannot possibly release all of our animals back into a wild that is under siege, and which they would have to share with wild populations that are as large as their habitats can currently accommodate. Serious problems require serious responses. As yet, anti-zoo activists have put forward no serious alternatives; we would be interested to hear them, but we can't afford to wait. — CNN

**Opinion**  
LESLEY DICKIE

CONTACT US 

*Daily News on Sunday 16/11/14 p. 8*

# Who is exterminating Africa's elephants?

**A** **HARD-HITTING** new report released by the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) last week, exposes corrupt individuals in the government of Tanzania, the country most severely affected by the slaughter of elephants, as enabling the burgeoning illegal ivory trade orchestrated largely by Chinese crime syndicates.

The scale of the crisis is depressing:

- Africa's total elephant population has plummeted from about 1.3 million in 1979 to around 419 000 today.
- Since 2006, official monitoring systems have documented an alarming rise in elephant poaching.
- Every year, between 20 000 and 40 000 elephants are butchered by poachers.
- East Africa, especially Tanzania, has been identified as the biggest source of illegal ivory.
- Between 2011 and 2013 a total of 116 tonnes of smuggled elephant ivory was seized by authorities, China being the predominant destination.

The situation is complex, involving many more people than just a few rotten apples in high places, but the EIA report emphasises that the crisis has its root causes in "a toxic blend of government failures, corruption and criminality" and that ultimate responsibility lies with "the highest levels of government".

## Opinion

ANDREAS WILSON-SPÄTH

The main problems include under-resourced and poorly protected wildlife reserves, mismanagement of the hunting industry, a failure to enforce wildlife laws, low conviction rates when cases are brought to court, and collusion between officials and ivory traffickers.

Corruption is singled out as a key enabling factor in every stage of the illegal ivory trade, involving local game rangers and police officers, Tanzanian Revenue Authority officers in the Indian Ocean ports through which elephant tusks are smuggled, ruling party politicians and well-connected business people.

Many of the implicated individuals are well known — their names have been published in the press, mentioned in Parliament, listed in intelligence reports and uncovered during EIA investigations, which also document details of the trade routes from the African bush all the way to the Asian ivory markets.

Yet very few of those involved have faced the legal consequences of their criminal activities.

In recent times, there have been some suggestions that the Tanzanian government is making increased efforts to stem the tide, including anti-poaching operations as well as seizures of illegal ivory, but much more action is needed to avert an irreversible disaster.

The situation may be dire, but it isn't hopeless. Faced with a comparable poaching epidemic that wiped out over half of its elephant population in the 1980s, Tanzania was instrumental in getting the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to implement a ban on the international ivory trade which brought the situation under control and allowed its elephant population to recover and stabilise.

The ban has since been undermined by CITES-sanctioned sales of ivory drawn from the stockpiles of Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa — a concession which critics claim has contributed to the resurgent demand for ivory and hence the increase in poaching.

To reverse the current crisis, China must adopt and enforce a complete domestic ban on trading in ivory.

But why should any one even care about elephant poaching in Tanzania? Simple: a growth in the illicit ivory trade is very likely to encourage increased poaching elsewhere. If we can't save Africa's elephants, what chance do we have of saving anything else?

Most of the profits from the illegal ivory trade go into the pockets of a small number of rich people.

Living elephants are major tourist attractions that are significantly more valuable to local communities than dead ones.

— News24

CTUS 



**'Climate change fight must involve media'**

**Foster Dongozi,**  
recently in NAIROBI, Kenya

AFRICAN governments and the United Nations have been urged to involve the media and journalists' organisations in the fight against climate change.

The call was made by leaders of unions and associations of African journalists at a meeting in the East African country.

In Zimbabwe, where the economy is agro-based, more than 70 percent of the population depends on climate-sensitive livelihoods such as crop production and livestock rearing.

Climate change has manifested itself through increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as droughts, reduced precipitation, and gradual increases in temperature.

"We call on the African Union, the UN Economic Commission for Africa and African governments to make climate change a priority by training media professionals for better information and sensitisation on policies and decisions on climate change," reads a communiqué issued after the conference.

The media was identified as a key partner in the fight against climate change, with recommendations made including the introduction of climate change as a course in media training institutions and in-house training provided for practicing journalists.

"We call for the development by journalists and development partners of a guide or manual for use while reporting on climate change," reads the communiqué.

"Strengthening cooperation between journalists, editors and media owners in tackling the fundamental threat of climate change is very critical while media organisations are encouraged to provide journalists with adequate resources for investigative reporting assignments on climate change."

The meeting acknowledged the important role played by mobile phones and social media in creating awareness in the fight against climate change.

"We encourage the taking advantage of digital platforms and social media to increase knowledge and awareness on climate change and the use of mobile phones to discuss and disseminate information on climate change."

African journalists noted that the continent needed to speak with one voice in tackling climate change which was threatening African economies, health, environment and was increasing hardships, unrest and social instability.

Federation of African Journalists, FAJ president, Mohammed Garba said: "As African journalists, we need to take the lead in informing Africans on the implications of climate change."

"The implications of a changing climate are so many and so serious. They include gender dynamics to effects on the Millennium Development Goals and other gains made by African governments over the years."

*Kenya News on Sunday 10/8/14 p.5*



# 'Zim's climate changing too fast'

Margaret Chinowaita  
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**Z**IMBABWE's climate change has occurred at a faster rate than is normally expected over a 30-year period and this has affected the rainfall patterns in the country.

Climate change is described as a change in global or regional climate patterns, in particular a change apparent from the mid to late 20th Century onwards and attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by the use of fossil fuels.

Barnabas Chipindu, meteorologist and lecturer in the Department of Physics at the University of Zimbabwe said climate change in Zimbabwe has been rapidly occurring.

"The meteorological community in Zimbabwe agrees that Zimbabwe's climate is changing and it will always continue to change.

"However, the rate of change seems to be faster than what is normally expected over a 30-year period. What is certain is that, the climate of Zimbabwe is now characterised by many extreme events such as severe storms, floods and droughts, strong winds, hail, frost

contribute to the global climate change by limiting deforestation, planting more trees, reducing the dependence on fossil fuels for energy supply and encouraging use of renewable energy such as solar energy and bio gas."

"The Government of Zimbabwe should be actively involved in international negotiations such as Conference of Parties, for reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases by industrialised countries," said Chipindu.

The onset of the rainy season has been delayed and Zimbabweans, including a large percentage of farmers in the rural areas are confused whether they should start planting or wait.

Chipindu explained the erratic rainy season which is characterised with an intermediate dry spell.

"The onset of the rainy season has been delayed because of change in the air circulation.

"During the beginning of the rainy season, the air masses which bring rain into the country come from the west in the form of what is called westerly waves.

"In some years, the onset of the rains is delayed because of the formation of a high pressure system in the middle levels of the atmosphere.

"The high pressure system is



Elliot Bungare, Met office head of external relations attending an international conference on climate change.

Services Department and other competent meteorologists on issues of climate change so that the public is given correct information.

"I would like to appeal to funding agencies to fund research on climate science, impact and

babweans are in the rural areas where they are engaged in subsistence farming.

John Mupuro a principal met officer at the Zimbabwe meteorological station said: "Climate change is evident in Zimbabwe, we were definite that temperature

However, the department is not fully funded to carry out activities like cloud seeding.

Bungare said the met department was awarded \$400 000 for cloud seeding in the recently-presented national budget by minister of Finance Patrick Chinamasa, yet the department requires around \$5 million to run smoothly. Bungare also said the department is short staffed.

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country, bordered by Botswana, Zambia, Namibia, Mozambique and South Africa.

According to a Climate and Development Knowledge Network, Zimbabwe is severely vulnerable to climate change and its vulnerability is set to increase between 2010 and 2030 (DARA; Climate Vulnerability Monitor, 2012).

It is ranked 156th on the Human Development Index (UNDP; Human Development Index, 2014).

A large proportion of Zimbabwe's population is exposed to extreme poverty and hunger.

About 70 percent of Zimbabweans live in rural areas, where they depend on natural resources for food and basic needs.

According to the network, this means climate impacts, which include heavy rainfall and drought

such as severe storms, floods and droughts, strong winds, hail, frost and heat waves," said Chipindu.

But using the definition of climate change, Zimbabwe though does not emit a lot of greenhouse gases

Chipindu said: "Zimbabwe emits insignificant quantities for the greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, ozone and chlorofluorocarbons that cause global warming and subsequent climate change.

"However, the country can

atmosphere.

"The high pressure system is characterised by descending air which inhibits cloud formation resulting in suppressed rainfall activity. I suspect this high pressure system has caused the delay in the onset of the rainfall season in most parts of Zimbabwe."

The scientist urged proper dissemination of information to the public.

"I would like to urge the policy makers and the media in Zimbabwe to consult the Meteorological

funding agencies to fund research on climate science, impact and adaptation. One needs to run an ensemble of as many as 15 global climate models in order to reduce uncertainties in climate change predictions."

The Meteorological department in Zimbabwe is working hard in trying to disseminate information on climate change but the department is limited to cellular networks, radios, television and some newspapers.

However, the bulk of Zim-

change is evident in Zimbabwe, we were definite that temperature was changing but we have seen that there is a shift in the amount of rainfall that we are receiving.

"Agritex should educate farmers that there is change.

"People are crying foul because they do not know what to do."

Elliot Bungare, head of external relations at the Zimbabwe Met Department said his department has climate change projects in Gutu, Zvishavane and Chirumanzu.

means climate impacts, which include heavy rainfall and drought, environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity, also impact upon development.

Research suggests that longer and more frequent droughts could substantially reduce crop yields — including maize — a staple crop in Zimbabwe.

Given the varied nature of Zimbabwe's biophysical characteristics, vulnerability to climate change is likely to vary significantly across the country.



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SUNDAY, JULY 20, 2014

NEWS

# Harare's wetlands under threat

Helen Kadirire  
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**W**ITH over 30 wetlands across Harare, these vast water holding bodies are now under threat.

More than half of the capital is built on wetlands but soon there could be nothing left as development, urban agriculture and pollution threatens their very existence.

University of Zimbabwe Professor Christopher Magadza said wetlands not only provide aesthetic appeal to the environment but can also be used to naturally purify water.

He told the *Daily News* on Sunday that unless Zimbabwe harnesses the purification power that these vast expanses of land possess, people will continue to drink contaminated water.

"If a lot of our street runoff coming through from our garbage heaps is allowed to run through a wetland into the river, the pollutants are removed," Magadza said.

He added that Lake Chivero will still remain polluted after the rehabilitation of the sewerage works unless wetlands are harnessed to purify runoff which is called the diffuse source pollution.

Magadza said unless the issue of pollution and siltation is addressed, Chivero will not be able to sustain the growing Harare population.

"If we have a drought, the water stored in the lake should be able to supply the city for at least three years," Magadza said adding; "But with the population growing, it is difficult.

"An engineer from the City of Harare told me that with the kind of siltation in the lake, we may have lost about six months of water storage".

Magadza said engineer-



Government and the City of Harare seem to be reluctant on the protection of wetlands in the city.

ing in the form of waste water management will need a lot of money to reduce phosphorus content to make the water suitable for consumption.

He also said there is need to purify the lake itself and not completely rely on rehabilitating the sewerage works, if a significant change will be realised.

Ecosystems manager at the Environmental Management Agency (Ema), Debra Magwada said there are 1 117 wetlands in Zimbabwe. She said about two percent of Zimbabwe is wetlands, most of which are in the communal areas.

"In the master plan of Harare, there are green areas which could not sustain development projects but with time, Harare has been targeted for construction and those wetlands are now being built on," Magwada said.

Environmental Impact Assessment and Ecosystems Protection Regulations (SI) 7 of 2007 provides for the protection of wetlands, however, Ema claims to have their hands tied when it comes to stopping any developments on these marshes.

Other wetlands that have been allocated for developmental purposes around Harare include one behind Dandaro Village in Borrowdale, the wetland at Warren Hills golf course and next to the National Sports Stadium where LongChen Mall

is located.

Magwada said in some parts of Harare, the water table had dropped from 18 metres below the surface to 30 metres, making it increasingly difficult to access water.

She emphasised that construction and industrial activities on wetlands were also giving rise to pollution of underground water.

"The Institute of Water and Sanitation indicates that by 2025, there will be water scarcity in Zimbabwe, however, we cannot talk about that because it is already happening," Magwada said.

Magwada said for wetlands to be respected, government must put a price value on them to show just how much is being depleted by human activity.

She said in some countries like the United States, New York City bought their wetlands and have since valued them to be over \$1 billion, which they guard jealously.

"As a nation we have not put monetary value on any of our wetlands", she said adding: "To a politician who wants to make ZimAsset work they will not make any considerations on building on wetlands.

"By putting a value on them and indicating the loss value of depleting the area we may get somewhere," Magwada said.

Dorothy Wakeling, programme manager of Monavale

Vlei said wetlands were like a basic necessity to the ecological balance of the environment.

She said Monavale Vlei was once on the verge of complete destruction through construction in the area but through lobbying, they managed to save the wetland.

"Currently, schools visit the Monavale Vlei because it provides them with practical experience, particularly university students, majoring in environmental studies," she said.

Wakeling also said resuscitating wetlands is not only for educational benefits, but also assists in bringing back various species of fauna and flora, that may be extinct in other parts of the country.

Wellington Pasirai of Chitora Village Ward 1 in Shurugwi said through funding from the Small Grant Fund and other partners, they have managed to harness the power of their wetlands in Shurugwi.

He said the wetlands had been destroyed by urban developmental expansion and agricultural activities.

"Now because it has been fenced and secured, we can carefully use water from the wetlands for irrigation purposes which help the community," Pasirai said.

The Ramsar Treaty which was adopted in 1971 is the only global environmental treaty that deals with a particular ecosystem and Zimbabwe became a signatory in 2011.

Zimbabwe has seven wetlands that have been designated as Ramsar sites and these are Monavale Vlei, Cleveland Dam, Mana Pools, Lake Chivero and Manyame, Chinhoyi Caves, Victoria Falls National Park, and Driefontein Grasslands.

Most of these wetlands are vital water sources for human settlements and wildlife within their catchment areas.



1. "Wetlands under new threat"

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## Wetlands under new threat

THE Marlborough vlei could soon disappear as more and more wetlands come under renewed threat of illegal housing activities.

Two months ago, the Environmental Management (EMA) held a meeting with Marlborough residents and gave them an ultimatum to stop farming activities in the area in order not to disturb the ecosystem.

However, that same area has since been pegged for residential development.

Indications are that the stands being earmarked for development are for employees of one of the government's agencies.

The latest development comes at a time when construction activities have started on the Ash-brittle wetland in Emerald Hill. Building activities on the Highlands vlei have also resumed after they were halted for some time last year.

Last December, a Chinese-run shopping centre opened its doors to the public following the finalisation of the controversial project that sits on another wetland in the Belvedere area close to the National Sports Stadium. Down the road from the same shopping centre, a service station was also constructed on the wetland near Mukvisi River.

This week, the Harare Residents Trust (HRT), said while government has created EMA, the agency has not been given sufficient resources to conduct public awareness campaigns, and even monitoring the pollution and decimation of wetlands by big companies and housing co-operatives.

"The enforcement attitude of EMA has largely been to punish local authorities on issues of waste disposal and management, but have not invested in building the capacity of local authorities to deal with this menace of poor waste management," said HRT.

Projections by environmentalists indicate that there would be water scarcity in Zimbabwe by 2025 as a result of the destruction and mismanagement of ecosystems such as wetlands.

According to the Conservation Society of Monavale Trust, which leads efforts to conserve the Monavale Vlei, wetlands are valuable assets quantifiable in water management and are just as important as other infrastructural assets of the city of Harare.

Healthy wetlands such as Monavale Vlei were said to be supporting 36 grass species and 86 plus other plants, as do similar intact wetlands in the Manyame/Marimba catchment area.

These grasses collectively, and naturally, remove pollution from run-off water, saving huge financial resources on operating waste water treatment works.

They replenish groundwater, contribute by transpiration to air moisture that results in rain; they also use up and store carbon dioxide to protect the climate.

The Trust said wetland destruction through cultivation and building eats into the capital of natural resources assets, thus resulting in a huge cost to Harare residents.

Their loss results in chronic inability to meet essential services of water and waste water management and creates additional costs which Harare residents have to bear. — Staff Reporter

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**National timber hectarage has fallen by 25 percent in the seven years to 2012, leading to company closures and almost 70 percent drop in export revenues.**

# Timber industry in doldrums

**Kenneth Matimaire**

**M**UTARE — Zimbabwe has depleted its timber plantation reserves, which were meant to cover 20 years, due to the reduction in plantation hectarage, which fell from 108 214 hectares to a mere 80 000 hectares over the past decade.

The collapse of the once vibrant industry has been attributed to various factors, from illegal settlements, mismanagement to an ineffective timber replanting exercise.

The ill-performance of the sector has in turn affected industries that depend on timber; most have folded or downsized over the past years.

A report by the Timber Producers Federation (TPF) seen by the *Financial Gazette's Companies & Markets* revealed that the country's timber plantation is in limbo.

The report indicates that the national timber hectarage has fallen by 25 percent in the seven years to 2012, leading to company closures and almost 70 percent drop in export revenues.

TPF said timber producers, such as Mutare Board and Paper Mills (MBPM), Allied Timbers Zimbabwe (ATZ), Border Timbers Limited (BTL) and Wattle Company, among others, lost about 30 000 hectares of prime timber due to illegal settlements after the fast-track land reform programme.

The bulk of the national timber industry lies in Manicaland Province, which witnessed a 20 percent fall in plantation area from 96 836 ha in 2005 to 77 718 ha last year.

The Midlands, Mashonaland West, Central and East Provinces, which constituted five percent of the national timber plantations in 2005, are down to 0,2 percent in 2012.

Export earnings dropped by 68 percent, from US\$34,9 million in 2005 to US\$11,3 million in 2012, while employment in the industry fell by 43 percent over the comparable period to less than 8,000 workers, from 14,253 in 2005.

Although the report did not show actual output, it indicated that the sector was no longer producing paper and paper products, matches, charcoal and wattle extracts, leaving the local market to import the products.

This was precipitated by the challenges faced by the supporting industries that either folded or downsized.

The country's sole paper producer, MBPM folded, while BTL downsized.

BTL chairman, Kenneth Schofield, said they would close non-performing units — Paulington factory and part of Nyakamete plant — due to the situation in the industry.

ATZ group chief executive officer, Joseph Kanyakanye, said illegal settlers were greatly to blame for the depletion of the country's timber industry.

"We have been battling against the illegal settlers whose presence in various estates threatens the existence of the timber industry. If the illegal settlements remain, we stand to lose our timber forests. If the whole issue is not addressed in next few years, there will be no timber industry to talk of in Zimbabwe," said Kanyakanye, adding that other timber producers were facing the same challenges.

ATZ has been battling against illegal settlers in many of its estates such as Gwendingwe and Martin Springfield Estate.

Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce president, Hlanganiso Matangaidze, who is based in Mutare, acknowledged that the timber industry was in dire straits.

"Timber used to be the biggest employer in Manicaland both in terms of direct employment and through downstream industries such as transport. It employed 10 000 people directly and 40 000 indirectly. But this is not the case now," said Matangaidze.

Mutare businessman, Kenneth Saruchera, said the timber industry continued to suffer as it has been overshadowed by the discovery of diamonds in Manicaland.

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Fin Gaz Feb. 6-12, 2014  
P.C. 3



## Tree species under threat

**A** NUMBER tree species are under threat in Zimbabwe due to a combination of factors, among them over-harvesting of the country's forests.

The Murara tree, which has some medicinal properties, is among the tree species at the risk of extinction.

Malvern Mushongahande, a forest entomologist and research co-ordinator at the Forestry Commission, said the Murara tree has not been sighted in areas where it used to be found.

While other tree species are disappearing due to over-harvesting, some are being cut down for firewood while others are being used to cure tobacco.

Research has also shown that pests from as far afield as Australia have put some of the tree species under bio security threat.

"In our last survey in the Chimanimani area, where the Murara is dominant, we failed to locate a single tree," said Mushongahande.

"There is now need to prioritise the forestry sector just as other sectors like tourism. In fact, tourism cannot survive without forests. On the other hand, there is huge debate on climate change. I believe it wholly centres on forests. The more we are destroying, the drier it becomes."

Illegal forests occupation in both indigenous and exotic plantations, inadequate funding of the sector, veldt fires, limited information on the forestry resources, limited participation of local communities in forest management, communal land tenure system and the issue of invasive alien species (pests) are some of the challenges facing Zimbabwe's forestry sector.

Parks and Wildlife Management Authority ecologist, Rose Chikerema, said something needed to be done to reverse the trend which also poses a threat to the wildlife habitat.

Natural and man-made causes like climate change and illegal activities in the National Parks estate have become a threat in these few years.

Wildlife survives mainly in the forests areas, and when these forests are compromised wildlife is also threatened.

The Zimbabwe National Parks estate comprises of five million hectares, a total of 13 percent of the country's land.

Zimbabwe forests are in relatively good shape, compared to some other countries in the region like Zambia, for example, where many forests were lost to charcoal production.

But, in the last three years, Zimbabwe's natural resource experts and the government estimate that more than 300 000 hectares of indigenous forests are now destroyed annually by new, mostly small-scale tobacco farmers, who use wood to cure the leaves.

Zimbabwe is the world's third largest producer of tobacco — an export industry that is attracting many.

Four years ago, there were about 3 500 small-scale tobacco farmers. This season there are at least 47 000.

The Forestry Commission is now legally requiring all tobacco farmers to set aside land for woodlots in the hope of reversing the damage to the country's natural forests. The country's forest resources cover approximately 66 percent of the total land area.

Like many other countries in sub Saharan Africa, forest stocks generate a wide range of timber and non-timber products and services indirectly and indirectly benefitting the population. — Own Correspondent.

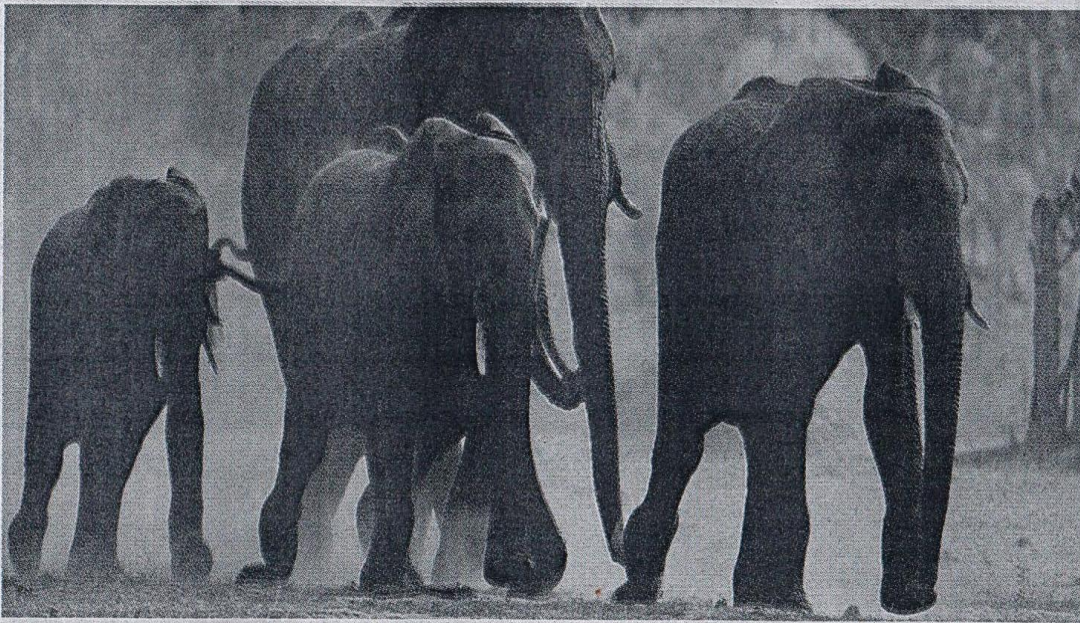
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Fin. Gaz. June 26 - July 2, 2014 p.13





# Tracking the presidential herd



*These elephants have been habituated to human beings, particularly in vehicles, and they move in groups, spending most of their time patrolling the vast estate.*



**Shame Makoshori**  
Senior Business Reporter

**W**AVES of dust spiralled into the air in the distance as we embarked on an early morning game drive in Hwange National Park — the cradle of a centuries old vibrant ecosystem that has evolved into a must-visit spot for nature lovers.

In the nearby valley, turmoil raged as a teen lion ambushed a herd of unsuspecting impalas in a raid that would be his early breakfast.

Under the leafless twigs of Mopani trees that are scattered across vast sandy patches of soil, a massive mixed herd of herbivores stretched as they woke up to begin another difficult day in one of southern Africa's most arid regions.

Food and water are scarce here, and for thousands of these vegetarians, their predicament is two-fold.

They must be on the look out for hungry predators that frequently raid them and snatch their weak siblings, at the same time moving over long distances in search of better pastures.

This predicament has united them against harm, I thought. Our attention had shifted to the imposing dust, so our guide had to quickly intervene.

"It is not a storm, it's just a herd of buffaloes," he said.

It was the start of an exploration that would take us across rolling plains, to track a rare lone rhino facing near extinction in this part of the world, and to man-made water pools where we played witness to a blazing tug-of-war for carcasses.



to a blazing tug-of-war for carcasses.

Here, a pack of lions had pounced on a young buffalo but a colony of hyenas had, in turn invaded the area to chase them away and feast on the loot—an experience that left me in doubt about the lion's famed 'king of the jungle' status.

"You people are very lucky," said our guide.

"This is a rare experience. You can't track and find a rhino, see a fresh kill and witness a war over carcasses in one trip," he said.

"We will now be hunting for the presidential herd," he said.

He took me by surprise.

President Robert Mugabe's elephants?

We combed through the valleys, leafless twigs, dry grasses that formed the chin of the sun-baked soils and several water points until we came face to face with the 450-strong herd.

These elephants have been habituated to human beings, particularly in vehicles, and they move in groups of about 15 extended families, spending most of their time patrolling the vast estate.

I was astounded by our guide's bravery.

We held our breath as he weaved the 4x4 deeper into the centre of the awesome creatures.

We were in the back of beyond, and any mishap would leave us at the mercy of the mammals.

Mothers brought kids to our vehicle.

I was terrified, but the guide cautioned me not to scream, or take pictures.

The herd has some of the most trusting undomesticated jumbos, and those who frequent the wildlife estate know some of them individually.

Tourists keen to see the herd make pre-booking for a registered game drive vehicle and a professional guide.

How did these animals turn into royalty?

"Given they and their family members had been virtually wiped out by hunters, the few remaining elephants naturally had become extremely skittish, acutely focused and wary of any human presence," says the website of a safari operator, Miombo Safaris.

"In the two interceding decades between 1970 and 1990, Alan Elliott who at that time owned the safari company called 'Touch the Wild' made a concerted effort to win over the remaining elephant's confidence and gradually, he was able to habituate them to human presence, thus sparking a wonderful and unique tourism draw card in Hwange."

But their friendliness was to later endanger them as poachers pounced on them, forcing Elliott to lobby President Mugabe to grant them a special status.

"Zimbabwe's presidential elephant herd was indeed anointed when President Mugabe in that same year decreed these habituated elephants that roam the Hwange estate should never be hunted or culled; rather that they should 'symbolise Zimbabwe's commitment to responsible wildlife management,'" adds Miombo on its website.

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NATIONAL NEWS

Fin, G92 4-10/9/14 p. 4

# Govt losing war on poaching



**Andrew Kunambura**  
Staff Reporter

**G**OVERNMENT is losing the war on poaching owing to lack of sufficient personnel and equipment to deal with the menace.

Environment, Water and Climate Minister, Saviour Kasukuwere, told Parliament last week that poachers were getting more advanced, as some of them were now using sophisticated methods and weaponry to kill dozens of endangered wildlife species, including elephants and rhinos.

He said this while responding to a question posed by Nkulumane legislator, Thamsanga Mahlangu, who wanted to know what measures government was employing to combat poaching during the parliamentary question time.

In his response, Kasukuwere said government was aware of the high rate of killing of animals in the game reserves by poachers using complex methods, adding that efforts to curb the crime were being hampered by lack of both personnel and equipment.

In addition to cyanide poisoning, poachers are also using helicopters and sophisticated weapons to mow down animals.

"We continue receiving information that poachers are wreaking havoc in wildlife sanctuaries. We are trying our best to contain the situation. Our efforts are being hampered by the shortage of manpower and equipment given that these poachers are using more and more sophisticated methods," he said.

"The (Zimbabwe Conservation) taskforce, which we set up is mobilising as much resources as possible to help fight the poachers. Both the government and the corporate



**Last year poachers killed over 300 elephants by lacing waterholes and salt licks with cyanide in the giant Hwange National Park.**

world are coming together to help contain the situation. The Environmental Management Agency is also assisting us with investigations. We are using helicopters to track them down and we are also working with the Zimbabwe Republic Police and other forces.

"We hope that in the near future, we will be able to use more modern methods of fighting them such as satellite tracking and radio communication. We are also in talks with other countries in the southern African region to establish cross boarder collaborations because poaching is affecting many other countries as well," Kasukuwere said.

Elephants and rhinos have been the prime target for poachers for their valuable horns that fetch huge prices on the international market.

Late last year, poachers sparked an international outcry after killing over 300 elephants by lacing waterholes and salt licks with cyanide in the giant Hwange National Park.

Despite reacting swiftly to the reports of wildlife poisoning, poaching has not stopped as more animals are dying from cyanide poisoning and other intricate methods employed by the poachers.

The full extent of the damage to Hwange National Park, the country's largest animal sanctuary, is still to be assessed. Conservationists have however, described the recent developments in the park as the worst single wildlife massacre in southern Africa for 25 years.

After the elephants died, predators such as lions, hyenas and vultures which fed on their carcasses also perished while other animals like the kudu and buffalo that shared the same waterholes also died, collapsing at short distances from the holes and licks.

Rare wildlife species are at risk of extinction. For example, Zimbabwe has an estimated 800 black rhinos left after poachers killed more than 1 500 in the last two decades.

The rest of the African continent has an estimated 2 400 black rhinos, down from about 65 000 in the mid-1980s.

Stakeholders have also called for stiffer penalties for offenders.

Eight of the people found guilty of last year's poisoning of elephants were slapped with effective 16-year jail terms; a punishment many thought was not deterrent enough.

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**Stephen Tsoroti**  
Own Correspondent

**W**ATER woes for Harare and its satellite towns are set to worsen as siltation at the main water source, Lake Chivero, reaches unprecedented levels.

Harare City Council officials, water experts and environmentalists admitted this week that the silting up of the capital's main source of water was now a major cause for concern as it has begun affecting the pumps that draw out water from the reservoir to Morton Jaffray Water Works.

The deposition of silt into Lake Chivero has reduced its total storage capacity by an estimated 20 percent.

The pumps are being clogged up by severe sedimentation resulting in them constantly malfunctioning.

"We have been facing challenges with pumping water from the reservoir. Silt has now overwhelmed the intake pumps," said Clifford Muzofa of Harare City Environmental Department.

Morton Jaffray Water Works has been undergoing rehabilitation as part of a Harare Water Plan to cost US\$2,95 billion.

To date Harare, Chitungwiza, Epworth and Norton towns are served from two pumping sites, Morton Jaffray water works and Prince Edward water works in Seke.

The two have been able to pump a meagre 450 mega litres per day of potable water.

It is envisaged that under the US\$144 million loan facility from the Export-Import Bank of China to go towards the rehabilitation of the water works, the city will be able to reach its original pumping capacity of 614 mega litres per day.

## Siltation threatens Chivero water supplies



**Lake Chivero has been under threat from pollution from sewerage effluent, industrial and domestic waste, fertilizer and pesticide from peri-urban agricultural activities in the catchment area.**

Environmentalists have long warned that rampant urban agriculture in the lake's entire catchment area would eventually completely silt the lake.

Christopher Magadza, a biologist and a leading expert in inland water, said the lake now has a projected six month water storage capacity owing to the high rate of

siltation.

"On our last count the lake had lost about nine metres due to silting. We should be thinking of building an alternative water source

considering the rate at which the lake is silting," said Magadza.

The Nobel laureate said the issues of abuse of Harare wetlands, stream bank cultivation and climate change have had a lot of impact on the water reservoir.

Tamuka Nhwatiwa of the Biological Sciences at the University of Zimbabwe, who is part of a team running a project on two of Harare's rivers, Gwebi and Marimba, concurred with preliminary studies they conducted that indicate that siltation is on the increase.

According to Nhwatiwa, urban agriculture has been a major contributor, submitting that scientific consensus is that developments on wetland will ultimately jeopardize the supply of clean drinking water to the city, as wetlands are primarily natural filtration systems.

In addition, local ecosystems will disappear and flooding could occur as natural waterways become obscure.

Lake Chivero has also been under threat from pollution from sewerage effluent, industrial and domestic waste, fertilizer and pesticide from peri-urban agricultural activities in the catchment area.

Lake Chivero (formerly Mcllwaine) was built in 1952 and lies 29km southwest downstream of Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe on the Manyame River.

It has a capacity of 250 106 cubic metres, is 225 metres deep and a surface area of 2 630 hectares.

The lake is Harare's main water supply reservoir which is one of seven Ramsar sites of Zimbabwe designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, which provides a framework for wetland conservation and asks that nations promote the sustainable utilisation and conservation of wetlands.

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# 1. "A giant about to vanish" 6.1

HARARE, ZIMBABWE, 9 — 15 MARCH 2014

## A giant about to vanish

in depth

Levi Mukarati

**Africa is staring at a looming, regrettable man-made catastrophe and the continent will soon wake up unable to locate one of its cherished treasures**

“UNLIKE past mass extinctions caused by events like asteroid strikes, volcanic eruptions and natural climate shifts, the current crisis is almost entirely caused by us, humans,” explains the Centre for Biological Diversity, an international non-profit organisation working to protect endangered species. “In fact, 99 percent of currently threatened species are at risk from human activities...”

On November 11, 2011, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) declared that the West African black rhinoceros had been hunted to extinction.

Human greed was to blame and the animal is now history.

**A giant about to disappear**  
Today, another of Africa's treasures, the elephant, finds itself in the same predicament as the West African black rhinoceros.

It is estimated that at the current poaching rate, children born in 2040 are unlikely to see a wild elephant.

Records show that despite an estimated five million elephants having roamed Africa from the Mediterranean

elephant is under threat.

### Zimbabwe's herd

Zimbabwe, like other nations, has been facing its challenges against poachers with the worst case being cyanide poisoning that killed an estimated 115 jumbos last year.

Critics say with the rate at which jumbos are being slaughtered, it is worrisome to note that the country has no accurate records on its elephants.

“Very few new surveys were conducted in Zimbabwe since 2007 and covered a small percentage of the overall (elephant) population. Half of the estimates included in the current update are now older than 10 years, resulting in an overall degradation of the quality of data from Zimbabwe,” said Elephant Database in its 2012 report.

“This lack of systematic and updated monitoring data is of serious concern for possibly the third largest elephant population in Africa.”

However, the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority public relations manager, Ms Caroline Washaya-Moyo, said estimates peg the country's herd at about 100 000.

“Roughly, 100 elephants were poached in the country last year, but additional to that, there are some which may have been poached outside the country as elephants tend to cross into neighbouring reserves,” she told *The Sunday Mail In-Depth*.

“At the moment, the elephant population is standing at about 100 000 and we put in place measures such as continuous training of game rangers to ensure that these elephants are protected.”

Last week, the authority received 23 all-terrain vehicles and kits for rangers to combat elephant poaching in the Hwange National Park. The development came as a new United Nations report shows that in 2012, more than 22 000 elephants were killed in Africa alone. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) states that despite the 2012 figure being 3 000 less than the killings in 2011, the drop is not enough and poaching continues to threaten the population of Africa's “keystone” species.

are unlikely to see a wild elephant.

Records show that despite an estimated five million elephants having roamed Africa from the Mediterranean coast to the southern tip of the continent just 50 years ago, only a tenth of that population remains.

Conservationists say the magnificent beasts are being “hunted left, right and centre and have nowhere to hide.”

Intensive illegal hunting of elephants for ivory, trophies, meat, medicines and jewellery, habitat loss and, to a lesser extent, climate change-induced droughts, have reduced elephant populations on the continent to less than 500 000. Investigations show that the animals are mostly slaughtered for their ivory which is used in making billiard balls, piano keys, Scottish bagpipes, buttons, chop sticks and a wide range of ornamental items.

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) African Elephant Crisis 2003 Rapid Response Assessment, the world's large terrestrial animal is now extinct in North Africa and only found in 31 to 38 countries on the continent.

“Their presence in three countries, namely Senegal, Somalia and Sudan, remains uncertain. Current population estimates suggest alarming declines in elephant populations in parts of Central and West Africa,” states part of the Rapid Response Assessment Report.

Previously secure populations in Eastern and Southern Africa are under growing threat as a wave of poaching seems to be spreading east and southwards across the African continent.

“Currently it is likely that the total continental population estimate is in the range of 450 000 to 600 000 with just three countries, Botswana, Tanzania and Zimbabwe accounting for well over half of these elephants.”

With populations diminishing at an alarming rate in West and Central Africa, fears are that poachers are moving down south and the Zimbabwean

### The demand

Elephant protection watchdogs say illegal trade in ivory is driven and sustained by consumers who are willing to pay high prices for the commodity, regardless of its origin or legality.

While demand in 20th century markets like Europe, North America and more recently, Japan, has dwindled through awareness campaigns linking ivory to the death of elephants, emerging markets in China and Thailand have put the African elephant on target.

China's ivory market has flourished as a result of changes in wealth and consumer spending patterns that the World Bank attributed to economic growth in the Asian country over the last 20 years.

Experts say consumers in China view ivory as a status symbol with a kilogramme of ivory selling for more than \$4 000 on the streets of Beijing while a single tusk can fetch up to \$50 000.

Investigations revealed that ivory from West and Central Africa is in demand because it is hard, more elastic and suitable for carving than that from Eastern and Southern Africa or Asia.

Despite the 1989 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) ban on international trade in ivory, thousands of the endangered animals continue to die. Conservationists say understanding the reasons behind the recent surge in elephant poaching is no simple task.

### Supply side

Experts concluded that the high levels of poaching, especially in East, West and Central Africa, is facilitated by conflicts which have, through lawlessness, provided arms for illegal killing of elephants. Furthermore, highly organised criminal networks operate with relative impunity to move large shipment of ivory off the continent to Asian markets.

The prevalence of unregulated

domestic ivory markets in many African cities, coupled with the large number of potential Asian buyers residing in Africa associated with infrastructure projects and resource extraction operations, also fuel the demand for ivory. This situation is further exacerbated in many countries due to weak governance and collusive corruption at all levels.”

### and criminal networks.

Poachers have been daringly targeting elephants in protected areas or on private land while the networks of receivers, facilitators and buyers moving illegal ivory across international borders continue to thrive.

Investigations show that a variety of smuggling methods are used by land,

river or sea with the majority of ivory being shipped in containers from East African sea ports to Asia by ocean vessels.

“Results from monitoring and systematic surveys ... reveal that poaching levels have tripled in recent years, with several elephants killed every single hour of the day. In Central and West Africa, the elephant may soon disappear from whole areas unless urgent action is taken,” said the United Nations under-secretary-general and UNEP executive director Achim Steiner.

Experts say it is clear that the African elephant faces the most serious conservation crisis since the species were moved from CITES Appendix II (not under threat of extinction) to Appendix I (threatened with extinction) in 1989, and a ban on commercial trade in ivory and other elephant specimens came into effect. Despite Appendix I classifying the animal as under threat from extinction, some criminals continue killing the elephant and cashing in from those who want to maintain a “status symbol” in society.

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12 Extra 14 December 2014

# The climate change

Sifelani Tsiko

THERE is an Indian saying: “When an arrow has hit, there is no time to ask who shot, or what kind of arrow it was.”

Similarly, as Africa encounters human suffering, largely as a result of climate change, the major polluting nations want Africans to respond with compassion rather than question the politics of who is historically responsible for climate change.

We have been told that climate change knows no boundaries and will affect food security, water availability and human health across the world significantly.

Instead of asking who is causing climate and what kinds of methods are being used to fuel global warming, major polluting nations want Africans to ignore and abandon the historical responsibility for climate change.

They want Africans to think: “We are all human beings, we will suffer the same and you have a right to happiness equal to our own. So why worry about who is the biggest polluter.”

As delegates trooped to the United Nations Climate Change Conference which was held in Lima, Peru from December 1 to 12, African negotiators were again chasing the elusive promises that ring with all major international climate change negotiations.

A string of UNFCCC gatherings have been organised world over in the past to discuss a broad range of climate change-related issues, but the big questions — including how to address carbon reduction in rich and poor countries and if tangible progress is being made — remain elusive.

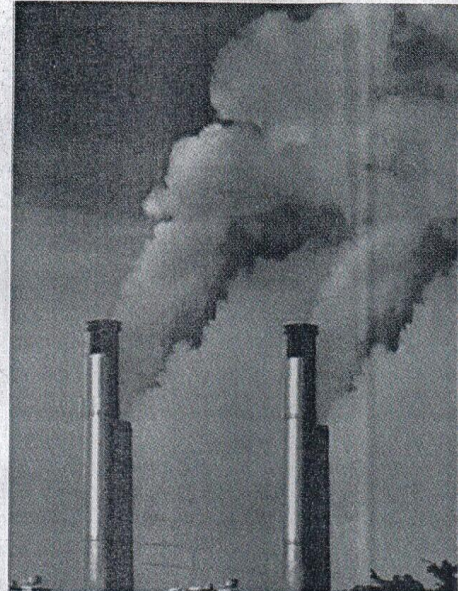
Africa and other developing countries have been pushing wealthier nations to accept tough short-term carbon emission targets, demanding cuts of at least 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020.

But the major polluting nations demurred, refusing to commit to new cuts now, even though their existing commitments would lead to a reduction of only four percent to 14 percent below 1990 levels by 2020.

At the Doha, Qatar meeting of 2012, Australia, the EU, Croatia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Norway and Switzerland agreed to a further commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol. So far, 14 countries have ratified the Treaty.

Major emitters such as China, the US, Russia, India, Japan, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea and South Africa announced politically binding reduction targets to be achieved by 2020.

Failure to ratify the treaty by the developed



**Africa encounters human suffering, largely as a result of climate change. The article argues for compassion rather than questioning the politics of who is responsible.**

nations is frustrating progress already achieved in combating climate change effects.

Samual Samson Ogallah of Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance says the non-committal stance of annex 1 countries to the treaty and other historical obligations accounts for the frustrations African groups and the civil society keep experiencing in various COP meetings.

He says such frustrations and shifting of goal posts led to the civil society walkout from the 2013 COP Meeting in Warsaw, Poland.

He encouraged the African negotiators to press forward without relenting.

At the Lima talks, the African group of negotiators urged developed countries to ratify an extension of the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol.

They also urged developed nations to show leadership in tackling climate change effects by ratifying the binding treaty.

Nagmeldin Elhassan, the chair of the African Negotiating Group, says ratifying the second commitment period is the only way Africa



# ge merry-go-round politics



**As a result of climate change, the major polluting nations want Africans to respond with**  
**cs of who is historically responsible for climate change**

and developing nations can take developed countries seriously on commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

He says by ratifying the agreement, the developed countries will build confidence among African countries suffering the brunt of Climate change that they are committed to reducing the suffering of the people due to climate change.

"We would like to encourage all parties to speedily ratify the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol to show progress under the new legal agreement under the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action. That will be amicable to all parties. But what we have observed is annex 1 party is reneging, abandoning and weakening the commitment of the Kyoto protocol."

Ratifying the agreement legally binds rich nations responsible for industrial pollutions to cut their emissions of climate-damaging greenhouse gases under specified targets of 15 to 30 per cent by 2020, and 60 to 80 per

cent by 2050.

Major polluting countries can either do this obligation directly or indirectly by helping developing countries with the required finance for capacity building, adaptation, mitigation and technology transfer among others.

At the Lima talks, developed countries committed themselves to mobilising us\$100 billion in climate finance per year by 2020 to support climate adaptation and mitigation in developing countries.

However, the African Group at the UN Climate change talks expressed concern that the pledge is far below expectations, affirming that the figure can only be considered a baseline for climate action.

"Recent pledges to the Green Climate Fund are a small first step, but funding around \$2.4 billion per year is not close to the actual need, and is a far cry from the us\$100 billion pledged for 2020. Lima should provide a clear roadmap for how finance contributions will increase step-by-step to 2020," says Seyni Nafo, Afri-

can Group spokesperson.

According to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate change will have wide-spread impacts on the African society and in their interaction with the natural environment.

Climate experts say the impact will be severe on food security, water availability and human health.

They also say it will have far-reaching effects on prices, supply chains, trade, investment and political relations in some countries.

In addition, they acknowledge that climate risks are threatening lives and prosperity of many people across Africa.

Climate change impacts will also increase risks of food insecurity and the breakdown of food systems; increase risks of loss of rural livelihoods and income due to insufficient access to drinking and irrigation water and reduced agricultural productivity particularly for farmers on the continent.

Risks due to extreme weather events will also lead to the breakdown of infrastructure networks and critical services such as electricity, water supply, health and emergency services in Africa, the IPCC says.

Given this scenario, there is need to sufficiently reflect on the full range of climate change issues and spur action at all levels to strengthen mitigation and adaptation mechanisms.

Conference hopping is not bringing tangible results. Even as African negotiators push their demands, tangible progress will remain elusive as major polluting countries renege on their obligations.

As is the norm at all major climate change conferences, rich nations will spread 'good feelings and good intentions' to ease worries of the hard-pressed global south community.

There will be much talk about "goodwill" and very little on real proposals on the table.

And, as delegates troop out Lima, they were left stuck in the same standoff that has all but paralysed global climate talks over the past several years.

Developing nations continue to press rich nations to accept deep, mandatory carbon cuts, and pay tens of billions of dollars in aid to help poor countries combat global warming.

Rich nations are squeamish about committing to extreme measures as they are feeling the squeeze of the global economic downturn.

In the end, it seems, we will just keep running in circles with rich nations pledging and not delivering and poor nations demanding and not getting any penny.

3. "Rainfall pattern now unpredictable" 6.3





# Forward with reclamation of wastelands

Andrew Mangwarara  
Garden Affair

Reclaiming of mine wastelands is a vital component that is incorporated in the environmental laws of many countries.

**M**INED land needs to be restored for the benefit of future generations because we live on a planet that is not expanding though the population is increasing.

There are provisions set out in the Constitution of Zimbabwe for an environment that is not harmful to the health and well-being of the people, to have an environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations, in Section 73 (Chapter 4). Thus it should be a matter of principle for mined lands to be restored to their original stable states.

Many years ago I had an opportunity to visit the Haller Park in Bamburi, Mombasa on the Kenyan coast.

The area was once a quarry waste-land used to produce cement, but today it is a thriving lush forest. The then

Bamburi Cement Company hired Dr Rene Haller to restore the limestone desert.

This was an almost impossible task. Dr Haller planted 26 plant species and of these only three survived: the damas, coconut palm and Casuarina were used to colonise the area.

Once these plants were established other plant species also established themselves, after Dr Haller identified the red legged millipede to feed on the tough needles of the Casuarina tree.

This made it possible for the organic matter to be decomposed and create an environment conducive for other plant species to succeed.

Many lessons can be drawn from this amazing story, which can be applied to our own Zimbabwean scenario.

However, reclaiming mined land requires a lot of capital injection, which hopefully can come from the companies that would have extracted minerals from the area.

It is also an opportunity for local communities to derive some benefits by being employed to restore these sites.

Land reclamation is not just a case of burying waste, smoothing out land and planting some vegetation; but is a process of returning a piece of land to its valuable state.

The land must be reformed to similar land use activities in that area, sup-

port of the same species diversity, conformity to community expectations and the Environment Management Agency must be in agreement to the restoration done.

This brings us back to the constitution whereby the land should be returned to a safe and stable landscape for humans, domestic animals and wildlife.

The process of land reclamation must begin with the removal of any wastes in the environment followed by re-contouring of mined pits to mimic the original landscape.

Topsoil can be reintroduced possibly from those areas which have been recently cleared in a process called direct return.

Direct return enhances the return of viable seeds from the same area, nutrients, organic matter and beneficial soil micro-organisms.

This process is followed by ripping of the land to open up the subsoil whilst seeding can be done simultaneously. Seed is broadcast by hand or by attaching a seeder to the bulldozer.

Only indigenous seed is used preferably within 15km of each mine to retain local genetic material in the area.

Fertiliser can be applied to the area at rates of about 500kg per hectare. The seeds planted must ensure that there is at least one legume plant per every square metre and another which is not.

Monitoring programmes should be carried out at nine-month intervals whilst erosion problems can be checked every 15 months.

Plant species diversity should also be measured. The area must not be occupied by just one or two species. This allows for greater colonisation by numerous animal and insect species, thereby promoting a more stable interactive ecosystem.

Land reclamation or reformation needs to happen now rather than later. As soon as mining ceases in an area efforts at reclamation must begin in earnest under the watchful eye of environmental agencies.

It is the responsibility of both small and large firms to restore mined land to its original state once mining is over.

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*Disused mine. (Picture by Kudakwashe Hunda)*